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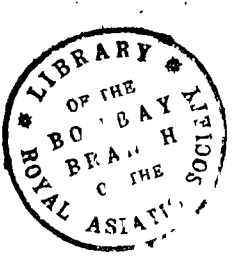

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Translated by W. HEYWOOD

With an Introduction by A. G. F. HOWELL

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FRANCISCAN DAYS

BEING SELECTIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR FROM ANCIENT FRANCISCAN WRITINGS

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED BY

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67096

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

271.3
Fou/Fra
67096

First Published in 1906

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE following extracts from ancient Franciscan writings are intended to set forth the most characteristic features of the life and teaching of S. Francis of Assisi, and the effect of that life and teaching upon his first disciples. The extracts have been translated expressly for this work, and in consequence of the space-limit imposed (one page for every day of the year) it has been sometimes found necessary to resort to compression and abridgment of the originals. In some cases it has been found advisable to combine narratives from more than one source (see, for instance, the extract for March 1). With regard to the arrangement of the extracts, those relating to S. Francis' life in the world, to the period of his conversion, and to the early days of his ministry, have been placed at the beginning of the book, and those relating to his fast of forty days on the mountain of La Verna, and to his last illness and death, have been assigned to the early autumn, the time of year when these events occurred. With these exceptions the extracts have not been arranged on any system; where, however, an extract had a special appropriate-

ness for a particular day it has been assigned to that day (*e.g.*, March 25, December 25). A word of explanation is needed in reference to the 'Works of S. Francis,' from which a good many of the extracts are taken, since the title is somewhat of a misnomer. The book in question is a compilation made by Father Luke Wadding, and was first published at Antwerp in 1623.* It consists (1) of compositions written by S. Francis or ascribed to him; (2) of extracts from ancient authorities and records setting forth his sayings and doings. The actual writings of S. Francis are (as one would expect) of very small bulk, and in the present volume those extracts which are taken from such of them as are included as genuine in the edition edited by Father Lemmens, and published by the College of S. Bonaventura (Quaracchi, near Florence) in 1904, are distinguished by an asterisk. The text of Father Lemmens has been followed in some cases in preference to that of Wadding.

It may be stated for the benefit of any readers to whom the subject is new, and who may wish to follow it up further, that several of the most important works relating to S. Francis are accessible in good English translations. Of the

* The reprint of it, entitled *Opuscoli di S. Francesco d'Assisi*, edited by Fr. Bernardo da Fivizzano, and published (with Italian translation) at Florence in 1880, is the edition to which references are given in the present volume.

Speculum Perfectionis (Mirror of Perfection), which was first published as an independent work by M. Paul Sabatier in 1898, there are two English translations—one by Dr. Sebastian Evans (D. Nutt), the other by Mr. R. Steele (Dent and Co.: Temple Classics). Translations of the *Legenda trium Sociorum* (Legend of S. Francis by the Three Companions), of the *Sacrum Commercium*, of the *Fioretti*, and of the Life by S. Bonaventura, have also appeared in the Temple Classics, and a translation of the *Fioretti* is also published in Methuen's 'Standard Library.' The compiler of the present work is preparing a translation of the Lives of S. Francis by Thomas of Celano, from which a large number of the extracts in this volume are taken.

Finally, it may be added that in this book the word 'Religion' is frequently used in the technical sense of a religious Order; that a 'Religious' means a person bound by the vows of a religious Order; that the Order of Preachers is the Dominican Order; that the Superior of a Franciscan convent was called the Warden (*Guardianus*), while the Custodian (*Custos*) had the oversight of a group of convents, the Provincial Minister that of a province (which might be co-extensive with a whole country—*e.g.*, the province of England), and the Minister-General that of the whole Order.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

An. Fr.—Analecta Franciscana (Chronicles and other documents relating to Franciscan history, published by the College of S. Bonaventura at Quaracchi, near Florence).

Bonaventura.—The life of S. Francis, by S. Bonaventura.

1 *Cel.*, 2 *Cel.*—The first and second lives of S. Francis, by Thomas of Celano (ed. P. Eduardus Alenconiensis; Rome, 1906. The references are to the numbered paragraphs in this edition).

Eccleston.—Thomas of Eccleston's *Liber de adventu Minorum in Angliam* (Monumenta Franciscana, Rolls Series, London, 1858).

Fioretti.—Passerini's edition of the Fioretti (Florence, 1903).

Opusc.—Opuscoli di S. Francesco (see note on p. vi.).

3 *Soc.*—Legenda trium Sociorum (ed. Faloci Pulignani, Foligno, 1898).

S. C.—Sacrum Commercium B. Francisci (ed. P. Eduardus Alenconiensis, Rome, 1900).

S. P.—Speculum Perfectionis (ed. Sabatier, Paris, 1898).

Ditto Redactio I.—Fr. Lemmens' edition of a shorter form of the *S. P.*, Quaracchi, 1901.

PRINCIPAL DATES IN S. FRANCIS' LIFE

1182. Birth of S. Francis.
1202-1203. Captivity at Perugia.
1204-1206. Conversion from the world.
1207-1209. Repairs the churches of S. Damian and S. Maria de Portiuncula (S. Maria degli Angeli).
1209. Begins to preach: is joined by the first brethren.
1210. With eleven brethren he receives the tonsure at Rome. His Rule verbally approved by Pope Innocent III.
1211. S. Maria de Portiuncula given by the Benedictines for the use of S. Francis and his brethren.
1217. The brethren first sent to preach in foreign countries. S. Francis pleads his cause before Pope Honorius III.
1219-1220. Visit to Egypt and the Holy Land.
1220, *September* 22. Bull of Honorius III. imposing a year's novitiate on all who would enter the Order.
Michaelmas. S. Francis resigns his office of Minister-General; the Order passes under the control of the Holy See.
1223, *November* 29. The Rule, after having undergone various modifications, is confirmed by Bull of Honorius III.
1224, *August* 15 to *September* 30. The forty days' fast on La Verna.
1226, *October* 3. Death of S. Francis.
1228, *July* 26. His canonization by Pope Gregory IX.

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S. FRANCIS' BIRTH AND EARLY DAYS

FRANCIS, a native of the city of Assisi, which is situated on the border of the valley of Spoleto, was first called John by his mother; but by his father (then returning from France), in whose absence he had been born, he was afterwards called Francis. When he was grown up, and become a man of subtle wit, he followed his father's calling—namely, trade—but in a very different manner, being merrier and more open-handed than he, given to sports and singing, going about the city of Assisi by day and night accompanied by men like himself. He was so extravagant in spending that all he could get and gain he consumed in feasting and other things: on which account he was many times taken to task by his parents, who told him that he spent so largely on himself and others that he seemed not to be their son, but the son of some great Prince. . . . But his mother, when her neighbours talked about his prodigality, would answer: 'What is it you think of my son? He shall be a son of God yet, through grace.'—3 *Soc.* 2.

S. FRANCIS AND THE BEGGAR

FRANCIS had a kind of natural courtesy in his ways and words, and never said an unkind or unseemly word to anyone. Nay, more, though he was a merry and wanton youth, he determined to give no answer to any who spoke unseemly words to him. In consequence of this, his fame so spread over almost the whole province that many who knew him said that he would do some great thing. . . . Though he was in trade, he was a very frivolous spender of worldly wealth; but one day, when he was about his business in the shop where he used to sell, a poor man came to him asking alms for the love of God. Held back by greed of riches and care of business, he refused alms to the beggar. But the grace of God looked on him, and he accused himself of great churlishness, saying: 'If the poor man had asked thee for something for the sake of a great Count or Baron, thou wouldst surely have given him what he asked for. How much rather, then, oughtest thou to have done it for the sake of the King of kings and Lord of all!' And on account of this he determined thenceforth never to refuse anything asked of him for the sake of so great a Lord.—3 *Soc.* 3.

S. FRANCIS' CAPTIVITY AT PERUGIA

ONCE, when there was war between Perugia and Assisi, Francis, with many of his fellow-citizens, was taken prisoner, and was kept with them in captivity at Perugia. However, as he was of noble bearing, he was imprisoned with the Knights. One day, when his fellow-prisoners were gloomy, he, being of a naturally cheerful and merry disposition, seemed not to be gloomy, but to be in some sort rejoicing. One of his companions chode with him for this, and told him he was behaving like a madman to rejoice even when in prison. Francis replied with warmth: 'What is it you think about me? I shall be adored all over the world.'

And when one of the Knights in whose company he had been put had done a wrong to one of his fellow-captives, and on that account all the others were refusing to associate with the wrong-doer, Francis alone did not deny him his company, but urged the others to act likewise. At the end of a year peace was once more made between the two cities, and Francis and the other prisoners returned to Assisi.—3 *Soc.* 4.

S. FRANCIS DETERMINES TO WIN HIS BRIDE

ONE evening [while still in the world] Francis was appointed by his fellow-revellers as their chief, so that he might spend their contributions as he pleased. Accordingly (as he had often done), he had a sumptuous feast prepared; and when they left the house, his companions went before him together, and passed through the city singing, while he, bearing a wand in his hand as their chief, came a little behind them, not singing, but deep in thought. And suddenly the Lord visited him, and his heart was filled with such sweetness that he could neither speak nor move. . . . But when his companions looked behind them and saw that he was so far away from them, they turned back, and, filled with awe, perceived that he had already been changed, as it were, into another man. Then they questioned him, saying: 'What wast thou thinking of that thou didst not come after us? Perhaps thou wast thinking of taking a wife?' 'You have said the truth,' he eagerly replied, 'for I have thought to take a nobler, richer, and fairer bride than you ever saw.' And they mocked him. But this he said, not of himself, but inspired by God: for that bride was the true Religion that he embraced, nobler, richer, and fairer than all others, through poverty.—3 *Soc.* 7.

S. FRANCIS AND HIS MOTHER

WHEN in the absence of his father Francis remained at home, even if he was eating alone in the house with his mother, he would cover the table with loaves of bread as if he were preparing for the whole family ; and when his mother asked him why he was putting so many loaves on the table, he answered that he did so in order to give alms to the poor, because he had determined to give to anyone who asked alms for the sake of God. His mother, who loved him above her other children, bore with him in such things, and observed his doings, greatly wondering thereat in her heart ; for, whereas he had been wont to set his heart on going after his companions when they invited him, and had been so attracted by their company that he would many times rise from table even if he had only eaten a little, leaving his parents in distress on account of his hasty departure, now his whole heart was fixed on looking out for the poor, or on hearing of any to whom he might give alms.—3 *Soc.* 9.

S. FRANCIS CHANGES CLOTHES WITH A BEGGAR

IT happened that Francis, after he had become changed by grace, though still wearing the habit of the world, . . . went on a pilgrimage to Rome. On entering S. Peter's church, he noticed that the offerings made by some were paltry, and said to himself: 'Since the chief of the Apostles should be splendidly honoured, why do these people make such small offerings in the church wherein his body rests?' And so, with great fervour, he put his hand into his purse, drew it out full of coins, and, throwing them through the grating of the altar, made such a din that all the bystanders were amazed at so splendid an offering. Then he went out in front of the church doors, where there were many poor people come to ask alms, stealthily borrowed the rags of a poor man, took off his own clothes, put on the rags, and stood with the other poor people on the steps of the church, asking alms in French: for he was fond of talking French, though he could not do so correctly. Then he put off the rags, resumed his own clothes, went back to Assisi, and began to pray the Lord to direct his way.—3 *Soc.* 10.

S. FRANCIS RENOUNCES HIS EARTHLY FATHER

[FRANCIS had sold some of his father's goods and offered the purchase-money to the priest of S. Damian for the service of God]; wherefore his father brought him before the Bishop of Assisi that he might renounce his inheritance and give up all that he had. Francis, the true lover of poverty, showed his readiness to do this, and in the Bishop's presence laid aside his clothes, and restored them with the money to his father. It was found that beneath his choice apparel he had been wearing sack-cloth next his skin. Then, intoxicated with wondrous fervour of spirit, Francis put off even his drawers, and, being entirely naked, said to his father, in the presence of all the company: 'Hitherto have I called thee my father on earth; but henceforth I may confidently say, "Our Father who art in heaven," for in Him I have put all my trust.' Then his father arose, took all the clothes and the money, and carried them home. But the Bishop, greatly marvelling at Francis' steadfastness, took him in his arms and covered him with his own mantle.—*Bonaventura* ii. 4; 3 *Soc.* 20.

S. FRANCIS AND THE LEPER

[DURING the time of his conversion], when Francis was praying fervently to the Lord one day, he received this answer : 'Francis, thou must despise and hate all the things thou hast loved after the flesh and hast desired to have, if thou wilt do My will ; but if thou begin to do this, the things which seemed to thee sweet and delightful before shall be intolerable and bitter to thee ; and from the things from which thou didst shrink before thou shalt derive immeasurable sweetness.' Rejoicing, therefore, herein, and encouraged by the Lord, he chanced, while riding near Assisi, to meet a leper. And since he had been used to feel a great loathing for lepers, he forced himself to dismount, offered the leper money, and kissed his hand. Then, having received a kiss of peace from him, he mounted his horse once more and went on his way.—3 *Soc.* 11.

[IN the beginning of his conversion from the world] Francis used to take one of his companions, of whom he was very fond, to secluded places, saying that he had found a great and precious treasure. . . . Francis used to bring him to a certain cavern near Assisi, and go in alone, leaving his companion outside and eager about getting the treasure. Then . . . he would pray to his Father in secret, not wishing that anyone should know what he was doing within save the Lord only, whom he diligently consulted touching the heavenly treasure to be gained. The enemy of the human race marked this, and strove by filling him with fear and horror to withdraw him from the good [work] he had begun. . . . For he endured the utmost suffering and distress of mind, unable to rest till he should fulfil the work he had conceived. Various thoughts came one after another and grievously molested him; within he was glowing with the Divine fire, and could not hide the blaze from outward view. He repented him of having sinned so grievously, and could neither delight in the past evil, nor yet in his present state; for he had not been given assurance that he could keep from evil in the future. And whenever he came out from the cavern to his companion he seemed changed into another man.—3 *Soc.* 12.

THE CRUCIFIX IN S. DAMIAN'S CHURCH

[IN the beginning of his conversion], when Francis was walking by the church of S. Damian, it was said to him in the spirit that he should go into it to pray. He went in, and began to pray fervently in front of an image of the Crucified, which addressed him thus with benign pity: 'Francis, seest thou not that My house is being destroyed? Go, therefore, and repair it for Me.' Trembling and astonished, Francis said, 'Gladly will I do it, Lord,' for he took it that that particular church was meant, since it was threatening to fall very soon from excessive age. And he was so filled with joy and illumined with light by reason of that address that he truly felt in his soul that it had been Christ crucified who had spoken to him. He went out of the church and found the priest sitting by it; and, putting his hand to his purse, he offered the priest some money, saying: 'I pray thee, sir, to buy oil, and cause a lamp to be kept constantly burning before the crucifix; and when this money has been spent on this work, I will give thee again so much as shall be needed.'—3 *Soc.* 13.

S. FRANCIS BEWAILS THE LORD'S PASSION

ONCE [in the early days of his conversion] Francis was walking alone near the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula weeping and wailing with a loud voice. A certain spiritual man heard him, and thought he was suffering from some infirmity or distress; and, moved with pity for him, he asked him why he was weeping. But Francis said: 'I am wailing for the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake I ought not to be ashamed to go through all the world weeping aloud.' On this the other likewise began to wail with a loud voice with him. And often when Francis rose from prayer his eyes seemed to be full of blood, for he wept very bitterly. Nor did he afflict himself by tears alone, but also by abstinence from food and drink, on account of the memory of the Lord's passion.—3 *Soc.* 14.

S. FRANCIS BEGS FOR STONES TO REPAIR S. DAMIAN'S CHURCH

WHEN God's servant Francis had stripped himself of all the things of the world, he busied himself with God's righteousness, and, setting at naught his own life, yielded himself in every way he could to the Divine service. He went back to the church of S. Damian with joyful fervour, and made himself a kind of hermit's garment. . . . Then he arose, went into the city [of Assisi], and began, as though inebriated in the spirit, to praise the Lord in the streets and open spaces. Then . . . he applied himself to getting stones for the repair of the said church, and he would say: 'He who gives me one stone shall have one reward; he who gives me two, shall have two rewards; he who gives me three, shall have that number of rewards.' So also he uttered many other simple words in fervour of spirit; for, having been chosen of God as unlettered and simple, he spoke not in learned words of men's wisdom, but behaved himself in all things with simplicity. Many mocked him, thinking him mad; others were moved to tears of pity at the sight of one who from so much wantonness and worldly vanity had come so quickly to such intoxication of Divine love. But he despised the mockery, and gave thanks to God in fervour of spirit.—3 *Soc.* 21.

S. FRANCIS REPAIRS S. DAMIAN'S CHURCH

WHILE Francis was diligently working at the repair of the church of S. Damian, desiring that the lights in the church should be continually burning, he went about the city to beg for oil ; but when he was come near a certain house he saw some men gathered together for play, and being ashamed to beg for alms before them, he turned back. But on reflection within himself he was convinced that he had sinned, and ran to the place where the game was going on, and owned himself guilty before all the bystanders for having been ashamed to ask alms because of them. Then with fervent spirit he went to that house and asked alms in French for the love of God to provide for the lights of the aforesaid church. . . . And whilst he was engaged with others in the work of repairing it, he used to cry aloud in French to the passers-by : 'Come and help me in the work of the church of S. Damian, which shall be the monastery of Ladies by whose fame and life our heavenly Father shall be glorified in the Church universal.' See how, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, he truly foretold what was to be !—3 *Soc.* 24.

S. FRANCIS DETERMINES TO BEG HIS BREAD

[AFTER his conversion, while Francis was dwelling with the priest of the church of S. Damian], the priest, though a poor man, used to try to get some special food for him, knowing that he had lived delicately in the world. . . . One day, when Francis saw what the priest was doing for him, he said to himself: 'Wilt thou find a priest like this whithersoever thou goest to show thee such kindness? This is not that poor man's life which thou didst wish to choose; but even as a poor man goes from door to door with his dish in his hand, and, under stress of need, gathers together different kinds of food, so must thou live of thy own free will for the sake of Him who was born poor and lived very poor in the world, and remained naked and poor on the tree, and was buried in another's grave.' So one day he took a porringer, went into the city, and begged alms from door to door. . . . But when he would eat the scraps he had collected he was disgusted at first, for he was not only unaccustomed to eat such things, but even to see them. But at last he conquered himself and began to eat; and it seemed to him that he had never had such pleasure in eating any dainty.—3 *Soc.* 22.

S. FRANCIS DETERMINES TO LIVE THE GOSPEL LIFE

WHEN Francis had now finished the work of repairing S. Damian's church, he was wearing a hermit's dress, and going about with a staff in his hand, and shoes on his feet, and girded with a leathern girdle. One day, on hearing at Mass the words spoken by Christ to the disciples whom He sent forth to preach—namely, that they should carry neither gold nor silver, nor wallet or scrip, nor staff on the way, nor have shoes, nor yet two tunics—and understanding these things more clearly afterwards from the priest [with whom he was living], he was filled with joy unspeakable, and said: 'This is what I long to fulfil with all my might. . . .' Thenceforth, therefore, he used neither staff, shoes, wallet, nor scrip; and made himself a very mean, coarse tunic; and casting away the girdle, he replaced it with a rope. Moreover, applying all his heart's zeal to the words of new grace, how he might fulfil them in deed, he began, by Divine instinct, to be a proclaimer of Gospel perfection, and with simplicity to preach repentance publicly.—3 *Soc.* 25.

S. FRANCIS AND HIS ADOPTED FATHER

[WHEN his father saw that Francis had embraced the life of a beggar, he was filled with grief and shame, and] used to curse him wherever he found him. But the man of God, marking his father's curses, took to him a certain poor, despised man to be his father, and he said to him : 'Come with me, and I will give thee of the alms that shall be given me. And when thou shalt see my father cursing me, I will say to thee : "Bless me, father!" and thou shalt make the sign of the cross over me and bless me in his stead. And so, when that poor man blessed him, the man of God said to his father : 'Thinkest thou not that God can provide me a father to give me his blessing against thy curses ?' Many of those who mocked him, seeing him thus derided, and bearing it all patiently, were filled with exceeding wonder.—3 *Soc.* 23.

DESCRIPTION OF S. FRANCIS' PERSONAL APPEARANCE

S. FRANCIS was kind and cheerful of countenance, free from laziness, and destitute of arrogance. He was of middle height, inclining to shortness; his head was of moderate size, and round; his face somewhat long and prominent, his forehead smooth and small; his eyes were black, of moderate size, and with a candid look; his hair was dark, his eyebrows straight; his nose symmetrical, thin, and straight; his ears upright, but small; his temples smooth. His words were kindly, [but] fiery and penetrating; his voice was powerful, sweet-toned, clear and sonorous. His teeth were set close together, white, and even; his lips thin and fine, his beard black and rather scanty, his neck slender; his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands attenuated, with long fingers and nails; his legs slight, his feet small, his skin fine, and his flesh very spare.—1 *Cel.* 83.

* IT was thus that the Lord granted to me, Brother Francis, to begin my repentance; for when I was in sin it seemed very bitter to me to look upon lepers; but the Lord Himself brought me among them, and I showed them kindness. And as I withdrew from among them, that which used to seem to me bitter was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And not long afterwards I came out from the world.

And the Lord granted me such trust in [His] churches that I used simply to pray in these words: 'We worship Thee, most holy Lord Jesu Christ, here and at all Thy churches which are in all the world, and we bless Thee for that Thou hast redeemed the world by Thy holy Cross.'

Afterwards the Lord granted me, and still grants me, [to put] such trust in the priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church, by reason of their Orders, that if they persecute me I will betake me to them. And if I had as great wisdom as Solomon had, and were to find poor priests of this world in the parish churches where they abide, I would not preach against their will. And I will fear, love, and honour them and all other priests as my lords; nor will I heed sin in them, because I discern the Son of God in them, and they are my lords.—*Testamentum S. Francisci* (*Opusc.* 104).

BROTHER BERNARD JOINS S. FRANCIS

AS the truth concerning both the simple teaching and life of blessed Francis became known among many, after two years had passed since his conversion certain men began to be disposed to repentance by his example, and, forsaking all, to join themselves to him in habit and in life. The first of them was Brother Bernard of holy memory, who, observing the constancy and fervour of the blessed Francis in God's service —I mean how with much toil he repaired ruinous churches and led a hard life, though he knew that Francis had lived delicately in the world— determined in his heart to give all he had to the poor, and steadfastly to cleave to him in life and in habit. One day, therefore, he came secretly to the man of God, disclosed his purpose to him, and settled with him that he (Francis) should come to him on a certain evening. When Francis heard this, he gave thanks to God and rejoiced greatly, for he had no companion, especially because Messer Bernard was a man of great edification.—3 *Soc.* 27.

S. FRANCIS CHOOSES A RULE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMPANIONS

[BERNARD and Peter, having resolved to join themselves to Francis, went with him to the church of S. Nicholas at Assisi to find out from the Gospel how the Lord had taught His disciples; but, not knowing how to find the passage about renouncing the world,] they devoutly asked the Lord that He would deign to show them His will at the first opening of the book. When they had finished their prayer, Francis took the closed book, and on his knees before the altar opened it, and at the first opening he happened on that counsel of the Lord, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Whereat Francis greatly rejoiced, and gave thanks to God; but, being a true worshipper of the Trinity, he wished to be confirmed by threefold testimony, and opened the book a second and a third time. At the second opening he happened on, 'Take nothing for the way,' etc.; and at the third on, 'He that would come after Me, let him deny himself,' etc. Therefore Francis said to his companions: 'Brethren, this is the life and rule for us, and for all who shall wish to join our company. Go ye, therefore, and fulfil what ye have heard.'—3 *Soc.* 28, 29.

S. FRANCIS AND THE COVETOUS PRIEST SYLVESTER

WHILST Bernard was giving away his goods to the poor, Francis was present, beholding the effectual working of the Lord, and glorifying and praising the Lord in his heart. But there came a priest named Sylvester, from whom Francis had bought stones for the repair of the church of S. Damian, and at the sight of so much money being spent by the advice of the man of God he was kindled with the fire of greed, and said to him : 'Francis, thou didst not pay me well for the stones thou boughtest of me.' But when the despiser of avarice heard him unjustly murmuring, he went up to Bernard, put his hand into Bernard's cloak, where the money was, and, with great fervour of spirit, drew it out full of coins, which he gave to the murmuring priest. Then, filling his hand with money a second time, he said : 'Art thou paid in full now, sir priest ?' 'I am paid in full, brother,' said the priest, and went joyfully home with the money he had thus received.—3 *Soc.* 30.

THE CONVERSION OF SYLVESTER

A FEW days after [he had received payment from Francis for the stones for the repair of the church of S. Damian] the same priest, inspired by the Lord, began to think on what Francis had done, and said to himself: 'Am I not a wretch, seeing that though I am an old man I covet temporal things, while this young man despises and abhors them for love of God?' And the following night he saw in a dream an immense cross, whose top touched the heavens, and whose foot was fixed in Francis' mouth, and its arms stretched from one end of the world to the other. So when the priest awoke he knew and firmly believed that Francis was a true friend and servant of Christ, and that the Religion which he had begun would spread forthwith over all the world. And so he began to fear God and do penance in his own house; and after a short time he entered the Order now begun, and in it lived an excellent life and made a glorious end.—3 *Soc.* 31.

RECEPTION OF BROTHER GILES

IN the earliest days of the Order, when S. Francis was staying at Rivo Torto with the only two companions he then had, there came to him from the world one named Giles (who was the third brother), in order to embrace his life. And as Giles was thus staying there for some days, wearing the garments he had brought with him from the world, it chanced that a poor man came to that place seeking alms from S. Francis. S. Francis turned to Giles, and said to him: 'Give the poor brother thy mantle.' He at once took it off his back with great gladness, and gave it to the poor man. And then it seemed that God had immediately poured new grace into his heart, for that he had joyfully given the mantle to the poor man. And so, having been received by S. Francis, he ever afterwards went on till he reached the highest perfection.—*S. P.* 36.

RECEPTION OF BROTHER GILES
(ANOTHER ACCOUNT)

WHEN Francis the man of God had been joined by two brethren, having no lodging where he might dwell with them, he removed with them to a poor little abandoned church called S. Maria de Portiuncula, and there they made a little dwelling, wherein they abode a while together. But after some days a man of Assisi named Giles came to them, and with great reverence and devotion besought the man of God on bended knees to receive him into his company. When the man of God saw that he was very faithful and devoted, and might win much favour from God (as the result afterwards made plain), he received him willingly, and these four, united with unbounded gladness and joy of the Holy Ghost, for the sake of greater profit divided in this wise: Francis took brother Giles with him, and went into the March of Ancona; and the other two betook themselves to a different region.—3 *Soc.* 32, 33.

THE BEGINNING OF S. FRANCIS' PREACHING

FRANCIS and brother Giles, as they went along, exulted exceedingly in the Lord, and the holy man, singing praises in French with loud, clear voice, blessed and glorified the goodness of the Most High. There was in them as much joy as if they had found a great treasure in the evangelic field of the Lady Poverty, for whose sake they had freely and gladly set at naught all temporal things as dung. And the holy man said to brother Giles: 'Our Religion will be like a fisherman who casts his nets into the water and catches a plenteous multitude of fish, and, leaving the little ones in the water, chooses the large ones to put into his vessels.' And thus he foretold that the Order was to be enlarged. Now, though the man of God did not as yet fully preach to the people, still, when he passed through cities and fortresses he exhorted all to love and fear God and do penance for their sins; and brother Giles admonished the hearers to believe Francis, for that he gave them the best advice.—3 *Soc.* 33.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF S. FRANCIS' PREACHING

THOSE who heard [the admonitions of Francis and Giles] said: 'Who are these men, and what are these words that they say?' For at that time the love and fear of God were almost everywhere quenched, and the way of repentance was wholly unknown, and, indeed, reputed folly. For the allurements of the flesh, the covetousness of the world, and the pride of life, had so far prevailed that all the world seemed wholly [occupied] in these three wickednesses. Therefore opinions differed concerning these evangelic men. Some said that they were fools or drunken; others maintained that such words proceeded not from folly. But one of the hearers said: 'Either they have cleaved to the Lord for the sake of the highest perfection, or else surely they are mad, for their way seems a desperate one, seeing that they use scanty food, walk barefoot, and are clad in the vilest garments.' And meanwhile, though some were smitten with fear at the sight of their manner of life, none followed them as yet.—3 *Soc.* 34.

S. FRANCIS JUSTIFIES POVERTY TO THE BISHOP OF ASSISI

THE Bishop of Assisi, to whom the man of God often went for advice, received him kindly, and said to him: 'Your life—I mean possessing nothing in the world—seems to me hard and rough.' 'My lord,' answered the holy man, 'if we had possessions, we should need arms for our protection; for thence spring questions and disputes, and the love of God and of one's neighbour is wont to be hindered thereby in many ways; and that is why we will not possess any temporal things in this world.' And the Bishop was much pleased by the answer of the man of God, who despised all transitory things, and especially money, to such a degree that in all his Rules he chiefly commended poverty, and made all the brethren careful to avoid money. . . . Wherefore in one of his Rules he said, in detestation of money: 'Let us who have left all things beware of losing the kingdom of heaven for so little. And if we find money anywhere, let us care no more for it than for the dust which we tread with our feet.'—3 *Soc.* 35.

S. FRANCIS ENCOURAGES HIS BRETHREN

S. FRANCIS, having now been enlightened by the grace of the Holy Ghost, called to him the six brethren [who had joined him], and foretold to them what would come to pass. 'Dearest brethren,' said he, 'let us consider our calling whereby God has called us in mercy, not only for our own salvation, but for that of many, in order that we may go through the world exhorting all peoples, both by example and word, to repent of their sins and have in memory God's commandments. Fear not, though ye seem of no account, despised and foolish, but confidently and in simplicity proclaim repentance, trusting in the Lord, Who overcame the world, for that He is speaking by His Spirit through you and in you to exhort all men to turn to Him and keep His commandments. Some men ye shall find faithful, meek, and kind, who shall receive you and your words with joy; and others, more in number, ye shall find faithless, proud, and blasphemers, who shall resist you and put you to reproach, and against these shall ye lift up your voice. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts to bear all things patiently and humbly.' And he blessed them.—3 *Soc.* 36.

HOW BROTHER GILES COMFORTED HIMSELF IN DISTRESS

S. FRANCIS, beholding brother Giles perfect in grace and virtue, and ready for every good work, loved him deeply, and would sometimes say of him to the other brethren, 'That is my knight of the Round Table.' And when brother Giles asked him what he would have him do, and whither he would have him go, S. Francis answered: 'Thy seat is prepared, go whithersoever thou wilt.' And so for four days he went about freely; but his spirit could not find rest in such liberty, so he came back to S. Francis and said: 'Father, send me whither thou wilt, for my conscience cannot find rest in such free obedience.' And S. Francis sent him to the hermitage of Fabriano. He went barefoot, clad in his tunic only, in the depth of winter, and a man who met him said: 'I would not go as thou art going, if I knew that I should enter paradise forthwith for doing it!' At which word the tempter made him feel such cold that he was almost dying. But in his distress he bethought him how the Lord Jesus went about barefoot and poor; and, being warmed by such meditation, he praised the Almighty who had so quickly filled him with His heat apart from material fire.—*An. Fr.* iii. 78.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF FRIARS MINOR, OR LESSER BRETHREN

THE blessed Francis once said : ' The Religion and life of the Lesser Brethren is a certain little flock (*sic*) which the Son of God has asked of His heavenly Father in this last hour, saying : " Father, I would that Thou shouldest make and give to Me a new and humble people in this last hour which shall be in humility and poverty unlike all other peoples that have gone before, and which shall be content to have Me only." And the Father heard His Son, and said : " My Son, it is done as Thou hast asked." ' Wherefore, the blessed Francis used to say that it was the will of God revealed to him that they should be called Lesser Brethren, because they are that poor and humble people whom the Son of God asked of His Father, concerning which people He Himself says in the Gospel : ' Fear not, little flock, because it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom '; and again : ' That which ye have done to one of My lesser brethren, ye have done to Me.' And although the Lord was referring to all who are poor and spiritual, still, in particular He was foretelling that the Order of Friars Minor would arise in His Church.—*S. P.* 26.

THE FRANCISCAN GREETING

AT the beginning of the Order, when S. Francis was going with a brother who was one of the first twelve, that brother greeted the men and women on the way and those that were in the fields, saying, 'The Lord give you peace' [which was the greeting that the Lord had revealed to S. Francis for the brethren to use]. And because people had never before heard such greeting given by any Religious, they wondered greatly at it. Indeed, some would say angrily to the brethren, 'What do you mean by this greeting of yours?' So that brother began to be ashamed of it, and said to S. Francis, 'Let me give a different greeting.' But S. Francis replied, 'Let them talk, for they perceive not the things that are of God. But do not be ashamed, for nobles and princes of this world shall yet show reverence to thee and the other brethren for this greeting. For it is no great thing if the Lord has chosen for Himself a new and small people, unequalled among all that have gone before, and unlike them in life and speech—a people who should be content to have naught but Him alone who is most sweet.' —*S. P.* 26.

THE PREACHING OF THE 'PENITENTS OF ASSISI'

ALL those who beheld [the first brethren going about] wondered greatly, because in dress and in life they were unlike all, and they seemed like wild men. Into what place soever they entered, whether city, fortress, village, or house, they proclaimed peace, and encouraged all to love the Creator of heaven and earth, and keep His commandments. Some heard them gladly; others, on the contrary, mocked them. Many asked them whence they were, and of what Order. To such, though it was toilsome to answer so many questions, they confessed with simplicity that they were penitents, natives of Assisi; for their Order was not [as yet] called a Religion. Many judged them to be knaves or fools, and would not receive them into their houses, lest like thieves they should remove their property by stealth. Wherefore in many places, after the wrongs put upon them, they sheltered in the porches of churches or houses.—3 *Soc.* 37, 38.

HARDSHIPS ENDURED BY THE FIRST BRETHREN

SMALL and great put [the first brethren] to reproach, and did them wrong, taking from them sometimes even the wretched garments they had. And, though the servants of God remained naked (since, according to the pattern of the Gospel, they wore but one tunic), they did not ask for what they had been deprived of, to be restored to them. But if any, moved by pity, wished to restore what had been taken, they received it back willingly. Some threw mud over them ; others put dice into their hands, and invited them to play ; others seized their hoods, and carried them on their backs, as if hanging. These and suchlike things they did to them, deeming them so cowardly that they boldly ill-treated them as they liked. Furthermore, they endured boundless tribulations and distresses by hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness ; but, as they had been admonished by Francis, they bore these things steadfastly and patiently, nor were they sad, nor did they speak evil of those who ill-treated them.—3 *Soc.* 39.

THE LIFE OF THE FIRST BRETHREN

WHEN men saw that the brethren exulted in their tribulations, continued diligently and devoutly in prayer, neither carried money with them nor accepted it, and had the greatest love for one another, whereby they were known to be truly disciples of the Lord, many were pricked in the heart, and came to them asking forgiveness for the offences they had committed against them. The brethren forgave them from their hearts, saying, 'The Lord spare you,' and gave them wholesome admonition concerning their salvation. . . . [At the appointed time the brethren, with others whom they had admitted to their company], returned to S. Maria de Portiuncula. When they saw one another once more they were filled with as much gladness and joy as if they remembered nothing of what they had suffered at the hands of the wicked. They were diligent in praying daily and working with their hands, so that they might wholly banish from themselves all idleness, which is the enemy of the soul.—3 *Soc.* 41.

BROTHER GILES AND THE WALNUTS

ONE day when brother Giles was in a public place in Rome, a man wanted walnuts beaten, and offered to pay another man for doing it for him, who refused because the place was very far off and the tree very difficult to climb. Quoth brother Giles: 'My friend, if thou wilt give me part of the walnuts I will come with thee to beat them'; and, having made the bargain, he went, and after first signing himself with the most holy Cross, he got up with great fear on the high walnut-tree to beat it. When he had beaten it so many walnuts fell to his share that he could not carry them in his lap; so he took off his tunic, tied the hood and sleeves together, and made a sack of it, remaining naked but for his drawers, and he put his tunic full of walnuts over his shoulders, carried them to Rome, and gave them all with great joy to the poor for the love of God.—*Fioretti* 228.

BROTHER BERNARD AND HIS COMPANION AT FLORENCE

AT Florence two of the first brethren who had been begging through the city could find no lodging. Coming to a house where there was an oven in the porch, they said to one another: 'We shall be able to find lodging here.' So they asked the lady of the house to take them in. On her refusing to do so, they humbly asked her at least to let them rest that night by the oven. After she had allowed them to do this, her husband came, and found them in the porch, and, calling his wife, he said to her: 'Why hast thou allowed these rogues to take shelter in our porch?' She answered that she had refused to receive them into the house, but had allowed them to lie outside the porch, where they could steal nothing but wood. Her husband would not let any covering be given them though it was very cold, because he thought they were rogues and thieves. But they, after spending that night by the oven in sober sleep until the hour of Matins, warmed only by Divine warmth and covered with the covering of Lady Poverty, went out to the nearest church to hear Matins.—3 *Soc.* 39.

BROTHER BERNARD AND HIS COMPANION AT FLORENCE (*continued*)

WHEN it was day, the woman [who had allowed the two brethren to sleep in the porch of her house] went to the same church, and seeing those brethren devoutly continuing in prayer, she said to herself: 'If these men were rogues and thieves, as my husband said, they would not thus reverently continue in prayer.' While she was thinking thus, a man named Guido was distributing alms to the poor abiding in that church, and when he was come to the brethren, and was going to give money to each of them as he gave to the others, they refused to take it. But he said to them: 'Why, being poor, do you not take the money like the others?' Brother Bernard answered: 'It is true that we are poor, but poverty is not so grievous to us as to other poor, for by God's grace, whose counsel we fulfil, we have become poor of our free choice. . . .' So the woman, observing that the brethren would not take the money, came up to them and told them she would be glad to receive them into her house if they would lodge there. They humbly answered: 'The Lord repay thee for thy good will.'—3 *Soc.* 40.

S. FRANCIS UPHOLDS THE DIGNITY OF LADY POVERTY

BEFORE the brethren were multiplied, and even afterwards, whenever they went through the world preaching, and were invited by anyone to eat and lodge at his house, however high in rank and rich their host might be, they would always at meal-times go for alms before they went to his house, on account of the good example the brethren were bound to show, and of the dignity of the Lady Poverty. And many times when he who had given the invitation asked Francis not to go [for alms], his answer was: 'I will not give up my royal dignity and inheritance, and the profession of myself and my brethren—namely, to go for alms from door to door.' Sometimes his host would accompany him, and would take the alms which Francis received, and, out of devotion to him, keep them as relics.—*S. P.* 22.

S. FRANCIS SWEEPS CHURCHES

WHEN S. Francis was dwelling at S. Maria de Portiuncula, and the brethren were as yet few, he used to go round the villages and churches in the neighbourhood of Assisi announcing and preaching to men that they should repent ; and he used to carry a broom to sweep the churches that were dirty, for he was much grieved whenever he saw a church that was not as clean as he wished. Always, therefore, when he had finished preaching, he gathered together all the priests who were present into some secluded spot, so that he might not be heard by lay-people, and preached to them concerning the salvation of souls, and especially did he urge them to be careful to keep clean the churches, and the altars and all things which pertain to the celebration of the Divine mysteries.—*S. P.* 56.

THE MUTUAL CHARITY AND OBEDIENCE OF THE BRETHREN

ONE day when two of the brethren were walking together they came upon a certain fool, who began to throw stones at them. One of them, therefore, seeing that stones were thrown at the other, at once put himself in the way of the blows from the stones, wishing that himself should be hit rather than his brother, because of the mutual love wherewith they were inflamed; and so one was ready to lay down his life for another. For they were so founded on humility and charity and rooted therein that one revered another as father and lord, and those who were foremost, either by their office of Superiors or by any [special] grace, seemed to be humbler and meaner than the rest. Moreover, all yielded themselves wholly to obedience, preparing themselves continually to obey him who gave an order, for they distinguished not between a just and an unjust order, but whatever was enjoined they deemed to be according to the will of the Lord, and therefore it was easy and pleasant to them to obey orders.—3 *Soc.* 42.

THE PERFECT CHARITY OF THE BRETHREN

IF ever it happened that one brother said a word to another that might distress him he was so troubled by his conscience that he could not rest till he had owned his guilt, throwing himself humbly on the ground that he might let the foot of the offended brother be put upon his mouth. But if the offended brother would not put his foot on the other's mouth, in case the offending brother was a superior, that superior ordered the other to put his foot on his mouth; but in case the offending brother was an inferior, he caused the offended brother to be ordered to do so by *his* superior, and thus they made it their study that all rancour and wickedness might be put away from them, and that perfect love might ever be observed among them, busying themselves to the best of their power in opposing every vice by its contrary virtue, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ preventing and helping them.—3 *Soc.* 43.

THE LIBERALITY OF THE BRETHREN

WHEN the brethren went on their way and met with any poor people asking them for anything for the love of God, when they had nothing else to bestow, they gave them some part of their garments, wretched as these were. Sometimes they would give the hood, cutting it off from the tunic, sometimes a sleeve, that they might fulfil that Gospel saying, 'Give to every one that asketh thee.' One day a poor man came to the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula, where the brethren dwelt at one time, and asked alms. A cloak was there which had belonged to one of the brethren when in the world. On the blessed Francis bidding him give it to the poor man, he gave it promptly and willingly. And forthwith, by reason of the reverence and devotion which that brother had shown in giving the cloak to the poor man, it seemed to him that that alms had gone up to heaven, and he felt himself flooded with a new joy.—3 *Soc.* 44.

S. FRANCIS AND POPE INNOCENT III.

[WHEN Francis was come to Rome to ask the Pope's approval of his Order, the Pope bade him pray to God that He would reveal to him whether his request were according to His will. And as he prayed, the Lord said to him in a parable]: 'There dwelt in a wilderness a poor and beautiful woman; and a certain King, admiring her beauty, desired to take her to wife. . . . The marriage was concluded, and many sons were begotten and reared, to whom their mother spoke thus: "My sons, be not ashamed, for ye are the King's sons. Go, therefore, to his Court, and he will supply you with all that is necessary." So when they were come to the King he wondered at their beauty, and, seeing his own likeness in them, he said to them: "Whose sons are ye?" And on their answering that they were the sons of a poor woman dwelling in the wilderness, the King embraced them with great joy, saying: "Fear not, for ye are my sons; for if strangers are nourished from my table, much more ye who are my legitimate children." The King therefore sent to the woman to bid her send all the sons she had borne to him to be nourished at his Court. . . .' So Francis understood that he was signified by that poor woman.—3 *Soc.* 50.

S. FRANCIS AND POPE INNOCENT III.
(continued)

[THEN Francis came before the Pope again, and set forth in order what the Lord had shown him, saying]: 'I am that poor woman whom God has loved and honoured through His mercy, and of whom He has been pleased to beget legitimate sons. And the King of kings has told me that He will nourish all the sons He shall beget by me. . . . For if the Lord gives temporal goods to sinners that they may nourish their sons, much more will He be bountiful to men of the Gospel, to whom this is due by merit.' When the Pope heard this, he marvelled exceedingly, for before the coming of Francis he had seen in a vision that the church of S. John Lateran was threatening to fall, and a certain Religious, lowly and despised, was bearing it up on his back. . . . And when a few days later Francis had come to him and disclosed his purpose . . . the Pope, seeing him so fervent in the love of God, and putting together the vision he himself had seen and the aforesaid parable that had been revealed to the man of God, began to say within himself: 'Truly this is that Religious and that holy man by whom the Church of God shall be lifted up and sustained.' And so the Pope embraced him and approved the Rule that he had written.—3 *Soc.* 51.

THE VISION OF THE GREAT TREE

[HAVING promised to obey and reverence the supreme Pontiff, and having obtained his blessing, and having also with his eleven companions received the tonsure], the man of God left the city and went forth into the world, greatly wondering that his desire had been so easily fulfilled, and daily increasing in hope and trust in the Saviour, who, by His holy revelations, had shown to him beforehand that which came to pass. For before he obtained [the favour of the Pope], one night when he had fallen asleep it seemed to him that he was going along a certain road by the side of which was a tree of great stature, fair, strong, and thick. And when he drew near and stood beneath it, wondering at its height and beauty, he himself suddenly became so tall that he touched the top of the tree, and very easily bent it down to the ground. And verily so it came to pass; [for] Pope Innocent, the loftiest, fairest, and strongest tree in the world, did so graciously bow himself at his petition and will.—3 *Soc.* 53.

S. FRANCIS FALLS INTO AN ECSTASY DURING PRAYER

[IN the early days of his ministry], when Francis was once marvelling at the Lord's mercy in regard to the benefits He had bestowed upon him, and was longing that the future course of his own and his disciples' life might be shown him by the Lord, he sought the place of prayer, as he was wont very often to do, and as he waited there upon the Ruler of the whole world for a long time with fear and trembling, thinking in the bitterness of his soul of the years ill spent, and often repeating the words, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,' by degrees a certain unspeakable joy and surpassing sweetness began to overflow his inmost heart. He began also to stand aloof from himself; the feelings were checked and the darkness dispersed which through fear of sin had gathered in his heart; there was poured into him assurance of the forgiveness of all offences, and confidence of restoration to grace was vouchsafed to him. Then he was caught up above himself, and wholly absorbed in a certain light; the capacity of his mind was enlarged, and he beheld clearly what was to come to pass. Finally, as that sweetness faded away with the light, having been renewed in spirit, he already seemed changed into another man.—1 *Cel.* 26.

THE BRETHREN ENJOINED TO WORK

LET none of the brethren, wheresoever they may be living in people's houses, as servants or workmen, act as chamberlains or cellarers, or be set over the households of those in whose service they are, nor let them undertake any business that may cause scandal or do harm to their own souls; but let them be lesser than all and subject to all who are in the same house. And let the brethren who know how to work, work, and ply the craft they know, provided it be not against their soul's health and they be able to work honestly. For the prophet says: 'Because thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands, blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee'; and the Apostle: 'He who will not work, let him not eat.' And: 'Let each one remain in the same trade and business wherein he was called.' And they may take for their work everything that is necessary, except money; and when need shall so require, let them go for alms like other brethren. And they may have the tools and instruments necessary for their trades.—*Regula* i., c. 7 (*Opusc.* 128).

AGAINST IDLENESS, SELFISHNESS, AND SULLENNESS

LET all the brethren zealously apply themselves to good works, for it is written: 'Always be doing something good, that the devil may find thee occupied'; and again: 'Idleness is the enemy of the soul.' Therefore, the servants of God ought always to busy themselves with prayer or some good work.

Let the brethren, wheresoever they may be, in hermitages or elsewhere, beware of taking any place for their own and of excluding others from it. And whosoever shall come to them, be he friend or foe, thief or robber, let him be made welcome. Wheresoever the brethren may be, or in whatsoever place they may meet one another, they ought to be careful to pay one another respect and honour ungrudgingly and spiritually. And let them beware of showing themselves outwardly sad or moody hypocrites, but let them show themselves rejoicing in the Lord, cheerful, and agreeable, in a becoming way.—*Regula* i., c. 7 (*Opusc.* 128).

THE BRETHREN ENCOURAGED TO GO FOR ALMS

MY dearest brethren and sons, said S. Francis, be not ashamed to go for alms, for that the Lord made Himself poor in this world for us, and after His example we have chosen the way of truest poverty. Now, if we have chosen the way of poverty for His sake, we ought not to be shy of going for alms. It is in no wise meet for the heirs of the kingdom of heaven to blush for the earnest of their heavenly inheritance. For this is our inheritance which our Lord Jesus Christ won, and left to us and to all who after His example will live in holiest poverty. Verily I say unto you, that many of the noblest and wisest of this world shall come to this congregation, and hold it a great honour and favour to go for alms. And ye, who are the first-fruits of them, be glad and rejoice, and refuse not to do that which ye are handing down to be done by those holy men. . . . And you ought to go for alms more readily and gladly than he who should offer a hundred pieces of money for one, because you offer the love of God to them from whom you ask alms, saying, 'Give us alms for the love of the Lord God,' in comparison of which heaven and earth are naught.—*Opusc.* 244.

THE BRETHREN WARNED AGAINST MONEY

* THE Lord commanded in the Gospel: 'See that ye beware of all wickedness and greed, and be on your guard against the anxieties of this world and the cares of this life.' Wherefore let no brother, wheresoever he may be, or whithersoever he be going, take, receive, or cause to be received, money or coin, either for clothes or books, or as hire for any work—no, not on any occasion, save for the manifest need of sick brethren, for that we ought not to hold or think that there is any greater use in money and coin than in stones. And the devil desires to blind those who covet money or deem it better than stones. Let us, therefore, beware (for that we have forsaken all things) lest we lose the kingdom of heaven for so little. And if we find any coin anywhere let us heed it no more than the dust which we tread with our feet, for 'vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. . . .' However, in case of there being lepers in manifest want, the brethren may beg alms for them. Yet let them greatly beware of money.—*Regula* i., c. 8 (*Opusc.* 130).

JUDGMENT ON A BROTHER TRANSGRESSING THE RULE

AS two brethren were walking together, they came near a lepers' hospital, and finding some money on the road, they halted, and discussed what should be done with such dung. One of them, laughing at his brother's conscience, wanted to take the money as an offering for the lepers. His companion forbade him, saying that he was misled by false piety, and urging upon the rash brother the words of the Rule, whence it is very clear that money found is to be trampled on like dust. The other hardened his mind against the warning (for he was ever habitually stiff-necked), despised the Rule, bent down, and took the money. But he did not escape God's judgment. Immediately he was deprived of speech, and gnashed with his teeth. And so did punishment proclaim this fool, so did retribution teach the arrogant one to obey the father's laws. At last he threw the foul stuff away, and his polluted lips, washed with the waters of penitence, were unloosed in praise.—2 *Cel.* 66.

PUNISHMENT OF A BROTHER FOR TOUCHING MONEY

ABOVE all the things of the world, Francis, the friend of God, execrated money. . . . One day a certain layman came into the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula to pray, and put down near the cross some money for an offering. When he withdrew, one of the brethren touched it with his hand, and put it on the window-sill. The holy man heard what the brother had done, and the brother, seeing that he was found out, hastened to beg for pardon, and, falling on the ground, offered to submit to stripes. The holy man rebuked him, and, after chiding him most severely for having touched the money, bade him remove it in his mouth from the window-sill, and with his mouth lay it on asses' dung outside the precincts. And while that brother gladly obeyed this command, the hearts of all who heard of it were filled with fear.—2 *Cel.* 65.

* LET all the brethren be zealous to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ, and remember that, as the Apostle says: 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content'; it behoves us to have nothing else in all the world. And they ought to rejoice when they associate with persons outcast and despised, with the poor and feeble, with the sick, with lepers and beggars by the wayside. And in case of necessity let them go for alms and not be ashamed, but rather remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God Almighty, set His face as a flint, and was not ashamed, but was a poor man and a guest, and Himself, with the Blessed Virgin and His disciples, lived on alms.

If men should do them shame and refuse to give them alms, let them thank God for it, because for their shame they shall receive great honour before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ; and let them know that the shame is not imputed to those that suffer it, but to those that inflict it. . . . And the brethren who get alms by work shall have a great reward; and they also cause those who give alms to make gain, for all the things that men do in this world shall perish, but for the charity and alms they have done they shall be rewarded of the Lord.—*Regula* i., c. 9 (*Opusc.* 132).

OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE BRETHREN IN SICKNESS

* IF any brother fall sick, wherever he may be, let not the other brethren leave him without appointing one or (if needful) more of their number to serve him, even as they would wish themselves to be served. But in extreme need they may leave him to some [other] person, who should do what his sickness requires. And I beg the brother who is sick to give thanks for everything to the Creator, and to desire to be such as the Lord would have him be, whether whole or sick, for that God trains all those whom He has foreordained to eternal life by the goads of scourges and sicknesses, and by the spirit of compunction, even as it is said in the Apocalypse: 'I correct and chastise those whom I love.' But if the sick man is annoyed or angry with God or his brethren, or if perchance he is eager in asking for medicines, overmuch longing to deliver the flesh, which must soon die, and which is the soul's enemy, this arises from evil, and the man is carnal, and seems not to be one of the brethren, for that he loves his body more than his soul.—*Regula* i., c. 10 (*Opusc.* 136).

BROTHER GILES ON PILGRIMAGE

BROTHER GILES, with S. Francis' leave, made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of S. James, and in all that journey he did not satisfy his hunger by reason of penury, which he gladly bore for the love of God. And one day, going for alms and finding none, he came to a threshing-floor where a few beans had been left. These he picked up and ate, and slept there that night, and was as much refreshed by the Lord as if he had had various kinds of food. As he journeyed on he met a poor man, and being moved by pity, cut the hood off his tunic and gave it him. And thus without a hood he walked for twenty days in succession. When he reached Ficarollo, in Lombardy, a man called him, and being in great want, he went gladly to the man, hoping to receive something from him. But the man put dice in his hand, and invited him to play. Then brother Giles, in nowise moved, humbly answered : 'The Lord forgive thee.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 76.

* I ENTREAT in love (which is God) all my brethren, preachers, speakers, and workers, both clerical and lay, to strive to humble themselves in all things, not to boast, nor rejoice in themselves, nor to exalt themselves inwardly concerning any good words and works, or, indeed, any good at all which God at any time says or does and works in them and through them, according to what the Lord himself says: 'But in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subjected to you.' And let us know of a surety that we have nothing of our own but vices and sins, and we ought rather to rejoice when we fall into divers temptations, and when we are bearing any trials or troubles of soul or body in this world for the sake of the life eternal. Let us all, therefore, brethren, beware of all pride and vainglory. Let us guard ourselves against the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh. For the spirit of the flesh is willing and zealous in regard to talk, but not much so in regard to work, and it seeks not the religion and inward holiness of the spirit, but wishes and longs for the religion and holiness that appear outwardly to men; and these are they of whom the Lord says: 'Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward.' —*Regula* i., c. 17 (*Opusc.* 144).

OF HUMBLING THE FLESH AND ASCRIBING ALL GOOD THINGS TO GOD

* THE spirit which is of the Lord wills that the flesh be mortified and despised, deemed of no account, set aside and held in reproach, and is zealous for humility, patience, pure simplicity, and true peace of spirit, and ever desires above all else the fear of God, the wisdom of God, and the Divine love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And let us ascribe all good things to God most high and supreme, and acknowledge them to be His, and give thanks for them all to Him from whom all good proceeds; and let Him, the most high and supreme and only true God, have, and have rendered to Him, and receive all honour, reverence, praise, blessing, thanks, and glory, whose is all good, and who alone is good. And when we see or hear evil done or said, or God blasphemed, let us on our part bless and praise God, who is blessed, world without end, Amen.—*Regula* i., c. 17 (*Opusc.* 146).

OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES AND GUARDING AGAINST THE WILES OF SATAN

* LET us all give heed, brethren, to the Lord's words, 'Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you.' For even our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footsteps we ought to follow, called His betrayer 'friend,' and freely gave Himself up to those who crucified Him. Therefore all they who wrongfully bring upon us trouble, distress, shame and outrage, pain and torments, martyrdom and death, are our friends, whom we ought much to love, because from what they inflict on us we have eternal life. And let us hate our body, with its vices and sins, because by living after the flesh it would take away from us the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the life eternal, and destroy itself with all [others] in hell. . . . Let us be much on our guard against the craft and subtlety of Satan, who would not have man turn his mind and heart to the Lord God, and goes about desiring to steal away the heart of man by a show of some reward or assistance, and to choke the words and commandments of the Lord out of memory, and to blind the heart of man by worldly business and care, and dwell therein himself.—*Regula* i., c. 22 (*Opusc.* 152).

BROTHER GILES AND THE CARDINAL

A CERTAIN Cardinal invited brother Giles to stay with him, and receive from him the food he needed. He consented to stay, but refused the food, because he was determined to live by the labours of his hands. . . . But the Cardinal asked him at least to eat at his table the food which he earned, and to this Brother Giles consented. . . . And so he always came to the Cardinal's table with the loaves he earned in the sweat of his face, and ate them. But one day there was such a flood of rain that brother Giles could not go out to earn, and the Cardinal said to him, rejoicing: 'To-day, brother Giles, thou must eat of my food.' But he was cogitating how he could earn anything that day; and he went to the kitchen and said to the cook: 'Why dost thou keep thy kitchen so dirty?' 'Because I have no one now to clean it.' Then brother Giles, having agreed for two loaves, swept the kitchen, and at dinner-time brought the bread that he had earned. And the Cardinal was astonished and vexed, for he saw himself baulked of his desire.—*An. Fr.* iii. 83.

AN EXHORTATION TO BE USED BY THE BRETHREN

* THIS (or the like) exhortation and praise all my brethren may (whensoever it shall please them) proclaim among all men whomsoever, with God's blessing:

'Fear and honour, laud and bless, and worship with thanksgiving, the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and Unity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Creator of all things. "Repent ye, and bring forth worthy fruits of repentance," for know ye that ye shall soon die. "Give, and it shall be given to you; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; and if ye forgive not, the Lord will not forgive your sins." Blessed are they who die in repentance, for they shall be in the kingdom of heaven. Woe to those who do not die in repentance, for they shall be the children of the devil, whose works they do, and shall go into eternal fire. Take heed and abstain from all evil, and persevere until the end in good.'—*Regula* i., c. 21 (*Opusc.* 150).

OF A BROTHER WHO DIED WITH THE RULE IN HIS HANDS

S. FRANCIS said that his Rule was for his followers the book of life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of paradise, and the covenant of an eternal alliance. . . . He taught them ever to keep it before their eyes, to remind them of the life they should lead, and, what is more, that they should die with it. Of this holy teaching a certain lay-brother was not unmindful. He had gone among the unbelievers from zeal of martyrdom, and when at last he was being led away to death holding the Rule with both hands, he bowed his knees humbly, and said to his companion: 'Of all the things I have done against this Rule, dearest brother, in the sight of God's majesty and in thy sight I proclaim myself guilty.' This brief confession was followed by the sword, whereby he and his companion ended their lives. . . . This man had entered the Order so young that he could scarcely bear the fasting prescribed by the Rule; but yet, though still a boy, he wore a corslet of mail next his skin.—*S. P.* 77; 2 *Cel.* 208; *An. Fr.* iii. 224.

S. FRANCIS' ACCOUNT OF THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY

* AFTER that the Lord gave me brethren, no one showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. And I caused this to be written down simply and in few words, and the Lord Pope confirmed it to me. And they who came to take up this life gave up whatever they might have to the poor, and were content with a single tunic, patched inside and out (if they wished), together with a girdle and drawers; and we would have no more. We clerks said the office like other clerks; the lay-brothers said the Lord's Prayer. We gladly abode in poor and forsaken churches, and were simple folk and subject to all. And I used to work with my hands, and I desire to work, and my earnest wish is that all the brethren should work at some decent employment; and let those who do not know how to, learn—not for greed of wages, but for the sake of a good example and to put away idleness. And if wages should not be given us for our work, let us repair to the table of the Lord, seeking alms from door to door. The Lord revealed to me that we should use this greeting: 'The Lord give thee peace.'—*Testamentum S. Francisci* (*Opusc.* 108).

THE HAPPY INTERCOURSE OF S. FRANCIS AND HIS COMPANIONS WITH HOLY POVERTY

[AS Francis and his companions journeyed from Rome after his Rule had been approved by Pope Innocent III.], they abode about fifteen days at a solitary place near the city of Orte. Some of them used to go into the city to get food, and bring back the little they had been able to beg from door to door to the others, and they all ate it together with thanksgiving and with joyful hearts. . . . Great was their exultation at seeing and having nothing which could give them vain or carnal delight. Then, moreover, they began to have intercourse with holy Poverty, and, comforted above measure by the lack of all things that are of the world, they determined to cleave to her for ever, everywhere, even as they were doing there. . . . But though the pleasantness of the place (which has no small power to weaken true strength of mind) did not hold back their affections, yet, lest a longer stay might entangle them even in the semblance of ownership, they withdrew thence, and followed their happy father into the valley of Spoleto; and they discussed the question whether they should live among men, or betake them to solitary places. But holy Francis . . . chose not to live for himself alone, but for Him who died for all, knowing himself to have been sent to gain souls for God which the devil was trying to take away. —1 *Cel.* 35.

AN INSTANCE OF S. FRANCIS' LITERAL OBSERVANCE OF THE GOSPEL

WHEN the blessed Francis was with the brethren [as yet few in number] whom he had, he lived with them in such poverty that they observed the holy Gospel to the letter in all things—namely, from that day when the Lord revealed to him that he and his brethren were to live according to the pattern of the holy Gospel. And so he forbade the brother who acted as cook to the brethren to soak the pulse in hot water overnight (as is usually done), when he was to give them to the brethren to eat next day, in order that they might observe that word of the holy Gospel: 'Be not anxious about the morrow.' Therefore that brother used to put off soaking the pulse till after Matins, when the day on which they were to be eaten had already begun. On this account many of the brethren in many places kept to this rule, and would not get or receive as alms more provisions than they needed for one day, especially in towns.—*S. P.* 19.

S. FRANCIS ENCOURAGES HIS FIRST DISCIPLES

COMFORT ye my beloved, and rejoice in the Lord, nor be ye made sorry for that ye are few, nor let my simplicity nor your own dismay you; for as the Lord has shown me in truth, God shall make you grow into a great multitude, and give you manifold enlargement by the favour of His blessing. Many shall be turned to the Lord, and throughout the whole world God shall multiply His family and increase it. I am constrained also for your profit to tell you what I have seen; but more gladly would I keep silence concerning it if charity did not constrain me to report it to you. I have seen a great multitude of men coming to us, and desiring to converse with us in the habit of holy Religion. And lo! the sound of them is still in my ears as they go and return according to the commandment of holy obedience. I have seen, as it were, the ways filled with the multitude of them coming together in these parts from almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards are hastening, Germans and English are running, and a mighty multitude of diverse other tongues are speeding. —*Opusc.* 232.

S. FRANCIS TEACHES THE BRETHREN TO PRAY—THEIR ZEALOUS OBEDIENCE

AT the time when they were sojourning at Rivo Torto the brethren entreated Francis to teach them to pray, because, walking in simplicity of spirit, they knew not as yet the offices of the Church. And he said to them: 'When ye pray, say "Our Father" and "We adore Thee, O Christ, at all Thy churches which are in all the world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."' And this the brethren, dutiful disciples of their master, were careful to observe, for not only those things which blessed Francis told them by way of brotherly advice or fatherly command, but even those things which he was thinking of or meditating on, if they could get to know them by any token, they strove most effectually to fulfil. For their blessed father used to tell them that true obedience refers not only to what is uttered, but to what is thought; not only to what is enjoined, but to what is desired.—1 *Cel.* 45.

S. FRANCIS AND THE EMPEROR OTHO IV.

[WHEN Francis and his companions were dwelling in a deserted hovel at Rivo Torto], the Emperor Otho passed through those quarters with great stir and pomp to take up the crown of the earthly empire. The holy father and his companions in the aforesaid hovel were close to the road by which the Emperor was passing, but he did not go out to look, nor did he allow any to do so, save one, who was most steadfastly to announce to the Emperor that this glory of his would endure but for a short time. For the glorious saint was dwelling within himself, and, walking in the amplitude of his heart, was making ready in himself an habitation meet for God; wherefore no outward clamour caught his ears, nor could any sound disturb or interrupt the vast business which he had in hand. The Apostolic authority was strong in him, and therefore he utterly refused to flatter kings and princes; he ever applied himself to holy simplicity, nor did he allow the straitness of his abode to cramp the breadth of his heart.—1 *Cel.* 43.

S. FRANCIS AND THE BROTHER WHO WAS STARVING HIMSELF TO DEATH

[ONE night while Francis and his little flock abode at Rivo Torto] one of the sheep cried out, the rest being asleep: 'I am dying, brethren—see, I am dying of hunger!' The good shepherd arose forthwith, and hastened to minister the fitting remedy to the ailing sheep. He bade the table to be spread, though it were furnished with rustic cates alone, and (as often happened) water supplied the want of wine. He himself began first to eat, and invited the other brethren to share in this office of charity, lest that famished brother should feel ashamed [to eat alone]. Then after they had taken food the father discoursed at large to his sons on the virtue of discretion, warning them each to have regard to his own strength in the service of God. To deprive the body indiscreetly of its due was, he said, a sin like that of giving it too much at the prompting of gluttony. And he added: 'What I have done in eating now, dear brethren, I have done by dispensation, not by inclination, at the bidding of brotherly charity. Let the charity be your example, not the food; for food ministers to gluttony, but charity to the spirit.'—2 *Cel.* 22.

PRACTICAL INJUNCTIONS TO THE BRETHREN

*LET everyone love and nourish his brother, even as a mother loves and nourishes her son, in those things wherein God bestows His grace upon them. 'And let not him that eateth not despise him that eateth, nor let him that eateth judge him that eateth not.' And in case of need all the brethren wheresoever they be may use any food that men can eat, according to our Lord's words concerning David, who ate the shew-bread, which it was unlawful to eat except for the priests.—*Regula* i. 9 (*Opusc.* 134).

THE DISMISSAL OF 'BROTHER FLY'

IN the early days of the Order, when the brethren dwelt at Rivo Torto near Assisi, there was one brother among them who prayed little and did not work, nor would he go for alms, but he ate well. When the blessed Francis considered these things, he knew by the Holy Ghost that that was a carnal man, and he said to him: 'Go thy way, brother fly, for thou wouldst eat up the labour of thy brethren, and be idle in God's work, like a barren drone which gains nothing, does no work, and eats up the labour and gain of the good bees.' And so he went his way, and because he was carnal he neither asked nor found mercy.—*S. P.* 24.

S. FRANCIS AND THE SICK BROTHER

WHEN S. Francis was at Rivo Torto a certain brother, a spiritual man and of long standing in the Order, lay sick there and in great weakness. S. Francis was moved with compassion towards him as he looked upon him, but because the brethren used no medicines in sickness, and did not even ask for them, but rather had pleasure in taking things prejudicial to the body, Francis said to himself: 'If this brother were to eat some ripe grapes early in the morning I believe they would do him good.' And he carried out his plan, for he rose very early one day, called that brother secretly, and brought him to a vineyard that was close by. Then he looked out a vine on which were grapes fit to eat, and sitting down by the vine with the brother, began to eat some of the grapes, that the brother might not feel ashamed at eating alone. And as they were eating, the brother was delivered from his sickness, and they praised the Lord together. And all his life long that brother remembered the kindness and compassion that the most holy father had shown and done towards him, and he would often tell the story among the brethren with great devotion and with tears.—*S. P.* 28.

S. FRANCIS AND HIS BRETHREN DEPART FROM RIVO TORTO

[THE hovel at Rivo Torto where S. Francis and his companions abode] was so narrow that they could scarce sit down or rest there. . . . The man of God wrote the names of the brethren on the beams of the hovel, so that each if he wished to rest or pray might recognise his own place. . . . One day while the brethren were abiding there a countryman came thither with his ass, intending to take shelter in the hovel. In order not to be driven away by the brethren, he made his way in with the ass, saying to it: 'Go in, go in, for we shall do good to this place.' When the holy father heard these words and perceived what the countryman meant, he was moved in spirit; for the man thought that the brethren intended to stay there [as owners] and enlarge the place in order to 'add house to house.' And S. Francis went out at once, and forsook that hovel, because of what the countryman had said, and he removed to another place not far from it called Portiuncula, where the church of S. Mary was that he had repaired long before. He would have nothing in the way of property, that he might the more fully possess all things in the Lord.—3 *Soc.* 55; 1 *Cel.* 44.

S. FRANCIS' LOVE FOR S. MARIA DE PORTIUNCULA

FRANCIS commended the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula to all the brethren as the place beloved by the glorious Virgin above all other places in this world. To his affection for this place and his commendation of it a certain vision greatly contributed, which had been seen by a brother while still living in the world, whom Francis loved with singular affection. . . . It appeared to this brother in a vision that all the men in this world were blind, and kneeling round S. Maria de Portiuncula, and with hands clasped and faces raised towards heaven, they were entreating the Lord with loud and lamentable voice that of His mercy He would deign to give them light. And as they prayed it seemed that a great brightness came forth from heaven and descended upon them, illuminating them all with healing light. He awoke, and steadfastly purposed to serve God. And soon afterwards he utterly forsook the wicked world with its pomps and entered Religion, wherein he remained humbly and devoutly serving God.—3 *Soc.* 56.

S. FRANCIS' HUMILITY

AT Pentecost all the brethren were wont to assemble at S. Maria de Portiuncula and discuss how they might best observe the Rule. . . . And S. Francis admonished, reproved, and gave commandments as it seemed good to him, according to the counsel of the Lord. But all things that he enjoined on them in words he showed forth affectionately and zealously in works. He venerated the Prelates, and the priests of S. Maria, and honoured the aged, the noble, and the rich; the poor also he loved and pitied with his inmost heart; and he showed himself subject unto all. High as he was above all the brethren, still he used to appoint one of the brethren abiding with him his warden and lord, whom, in order that he might put away from himself all occasion of pride, he obeyed with humility and devotion. For among all men he humbled his head even to the ground, that he might deserve one day to be exalted among the saints and chosen of God in His presence.—3 *Soc.* 57.

S. FRANCIS' COMMISSION TO THE BRETHREN

IN God's name, go on your way two and two, humbly, virtuously, and, above all, in strict silence from morning until after tierce, praying to the Lord in your hearts. Let not idle and unprofitable words be uttered among you; for though you are journeying, yet let your way of life be as humble and virtuous as if you were in a hermitage or cell. For wherever we are and are journeying, we always have our cell with us. For brother body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit which abides in the cell, to pray to the Lord and meditate on Him: wherefore if the soul abide not quietly in its cell, a cell made with hands profits the Religious little. Let your conversation among the people be such that whosoever shall hear or see you may devoutly praise our glorious heavenly Father and God. Proclaim peace to all, saying, 'The Lord give thee peace!' But as ye proclaim peace with your mouth, so have it yet more in your heart. Let none through you be moved to wrath or scandal, but let all be moved by your gentleness to peace, kindness, and concord. For our vocation is to heal the wounded, to bind up the broken, and to call back the erring. For many will seem to you members of the devil who shall yet be disciples of Christ.—*Opusc.* 272.

S. FRANCIS AS PREACHER

FRANCIS, the valiant knight of Christ, went round the cities and fortresses proclaiming the kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and repentance for the remission of sins, not with plausible words of human wisdom, but with the learning and power of the Spirit. The Apostolic authority which had been granted him enabled him to act in all things with confidence, without using flattery or seducing blandishments. Incapable of showing favour to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof, because he had persuaded himself by practice of that which he endeavoured to commend to others by his words; and, without fear of any reprover, he uttered the truth most confidently, so that the most learned men, mighty in renown and dignity, wondered at his sermons and were smitten by his presence with wholesome fear. Men and women ran, clerks hastened, the Religious made speed to see and hear the holy man of God, who seemed to all to be a man of another world.—1 *Cel.* 36.

THE FIRST PREACHING OF S. FRANCIS IN UMBRIA

[IN Umbria in the early days of his ministry] people of every age and either sex hastened to behold the wonders which the Lord was newly working in the world by His servant. Surely at that time, whether by holy Francis' presence or by the fame [of him], it seemed that, as it were, a new light had been sent from heaven on earth, scattering the universal blackness of darkness which had seized on wellnigh the whole of that region, so that scarce anyone knew whither he must go. For such a depth of forgetfulness of God and such slumber of neglect of His commandments had oppressed almost all that they could scarce endure to be roused, even slightly, from their old and inveterate sins. He darted his beams like a star shining in the gloom of night, and as it were the morning spread over the darkness; and thus it came to pass that in a short time the face of the whole province was changed, and she appeared of more cheerful countenance, the former foulness having been everywhere laid aside.—1 *Cel.* 36, 37.

THE EFFECT OF S. FRANCIS' PREACHING IN UMBRIA

[ON Francis' preaching in Umbria] the former dryness was done away, and in the field erstwhile hard the crops sprang up; the untended vine began, moreover, to put forth shoots of Divine fragrance, and, after bearing blossoms of sweetness, yielded fruits of honour and virtue together. Everywhere thanksgiving and the voice of praise were resounding in such wise that many cast away the cares of the world, and in the life and teaching of most blessed father Francis gained knowledge of themselves, and aspired to love of their Creator and reverence for Him. Many among the people, nobles and plebeians, clerks and lay-folk, pierced by God's inspiration, began to come to holy Francis, longing evermore to fight under his discipline and leadership: all of whom the saint of God, like a plenteous stream of heavenly grace, watered with anointing showers, and beautified the field of their hearts with flowers of virtue.—1 *Cel.* 37.

THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE FIRST BRETHREN

OH, with what ardour of charity did these new disciples of Christ burn! What love of their pious fellowship flourished among them! For whenever they came together in any place, or met one another by the way, there sprang up a shoot of spiritual love, scattering over all love, the seeds of true affection. What can I say more? Their embraces were chaste, their feelings gentle, their kisses holy, their intercourse sweet, their laughter modest, their look cheerful, their eye single, their spirit submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft, their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring. And for that they despised all earthly things, and never loved one another with private love, but poured forth all their affection in common, the business of all alike was to give up themselves as the price of supplying their brethren's need.—1 *Cel.* 38, 39.

S. FRANCIS' EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHREN SENT FORTH AMONG THE SARACENS

MY children, God has bidden me send you to the land of the Saracens to preach and confess His faith and attack the Mahometan law. And I also will go to the unbelievers in another direction, and will send other brethren through all the world. Wherefore, my sons, prepare to fulfil the will of the Lord. And that ye may be the better able to perform the commandment of God for the salvation of your souls, see that there be among you peace and concord, and an indissoluble bond of charity. Flee from envy, which was the beginning of our fall. Be patient in tribulation and humble in success; so shall ye be conquerors in every fight. Be imitators of Christ in poverty, obedience, and chastity; for the Lord Jesus Christ was born and lived in poverty; He taught poverty, and with poverty He died. And that He might show His love for chastity, He willed to be born of a virgin; He sent before Him the Innocents, virgin soldiers; He counselled and kept virginity; He passed out of this life among virgins. Obedience also He preserved from His birth till His death on the Cross. Let your hope be in God alone, who will guide and help you.—*Opusc.* 274.

THESE followers of holy poverty, having nothing, loved nothing, and therefore had no fear of losing anything. They were content with a tunic only, patched sometimes within and without; no elegance was seen in it, but great abjectness and vileness, to the end they might wholly appear therein as crucified to the world. They were girt with a cord, and wore drawers of common stuff; and they were piously purposed to remain in that state, and to have nothing more. Everywhere therefore they were secure, nor kept in suspense by any fear; distracted by no care, they awaited the morrow without solicitude, nor, though oftentimes in great straits in their journeyings, were they ever in anxiety about a night's lodging. For when, as often happened, they lacked a lodging in the coldest weather, an oven sheltered them, or, at least, they lay hid by night humbly in underground places or in caves. And by day those who knew how to worked with their hands, and they stayed in lepers' houses, or in other decent places, serving all with humility and devotion.—1 *Cel.* 39.

THE PATIENCE OF THE FIRST BRETHREN

NEVER would [the early disciples of Francis] exercise any calling whence scandal might arise, but, by always doing holy, just, virtuous, and useful deeds, they provoked all with whom they lived to copy their humility and patience. The virtue of patience had so compassed them about that they rather sought to be where they might suffer persecution of their bodies than where they might be uplifted by the world's favour, if their holiness was acknowledged or praised. For many times when they were reviled, insulted, stripped naked, scourged, bound, or imprisoned, they would not avail themselves of anyone's protection, but bore all so bravely that the voice of praise and thanksgiving alone sounded in their mouth. Scarcely, or not at all, did they cease from praising God and from prayer ; but, recalling by constant examination what they had done, they rendered thanks to God for what they had done well, and groans and tears for what they had neglected or unadvisedly committed.—1 *Cel.* 40.

THE FIRST BRETHREN'S ZEAL IN PRAYER AND THEIR ENDURANCE

[THE early disciples of Francis] deemed themselves forsaken by God unless they knew themselves in their devotions to be constantly visited by their wonted piety. And when they would apply themselves to prayer they sought the support of certain appliances lest sleep should seize them. Some were held up by hanging ropes, some surrounded themselves with instruments of iron, while others shut themselves in wooden cages. . . . And so vigorously did they set at naught all earthly things that they scarce submitted to take the barest necessities of life, and having been parted by such long usage from bodily comfort, they shrank not from any hardships. Amid all this they followed after peace and gentleness with all men, and, ever behaving themselves modestly and peaceably, they were most zealous in avoiding all occasions of scandal. —1 *Cel.* 40.

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE FIRST BRETHREN

SO much had holy simplicity filled the first disciples of Francis, so much did purity of heart possess them, that they were entirely unaware of duplicity of mind. . . . For once when they were often confessing their sins to a secular priest who was deservedly infamous, and whose wickedness had been made known to them by many, they would by no means believe it, nor did they on that account omit to confess their sins to him as usual, or to pay him due reverence. And when one day he (or another priest) had said to one of the brethren: 'See, brother, that thou be not a hypocrite,' that brother immediately believed, by reason of the priest's words, that he was a hypocrite, and therefore day and night he lamented, being moved with exceeding grief. . . . He continued a long time in such simplicity, but was calmed at length by the blessed father's words, who explained to him the priest's saying, and wisely made excuse for the priest's intention. —1 *Cel.* 46.

S. FRANCIS MAKES SNOWBALLS

[ONCE in winter Francis was troubled by a grievous temptation of the flesh], and seeing that, in spite of scourging himself, the temptation did not leave him, though all his members were covered with weals, he opened his cell, went out into the garden, and plunged naked into deep snow. Then, filling his hands with the snow, he made up seven lumps of it like balls, and setting them before him, began to address his body thus: 'See,' he said, 'this large one is thy wife, those four are thy two sons and two daughters, the others are the manservant and maidservant who are required to wait on them; and make haste and clothe them all, for they are dying of cold! If, however, the manifold care of them troubles thee, be zealous to serve God only.' Forthwith the devil departed, being put to confusion, and the holy man went back to his cell glorifying God. A certain spiritual brother, who was then engaged in prayer, saw it all by the bright moonlight; and when Francis found out afterwards that the brother had seen him, he was much distressed, and bade him reveal the thing to no one as long as he should live.—*2 Cel.* 117.

SALUTATION OF OUR LADY

* HAIL! holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, who art a virgin for ever, chosen by the most holy Father from heaven. Thee did He consecrate with His most holy beloved Son and the Spirit the Paraclete. In thee was and is all fulness of grace and every good. Hail! thou His palace. Hail! thou His tabernacle. Hail! thou His house. Hail! thou His garment. Hail! thou His handmaid. Hail! thou His Mother, and all ye holy Virtues which by the grace and illumination of the Holy Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful, to the end that, from being unfaithful, ye may make them faithful to God.—*Opusc.* 94.

AGAINST IDLE WORDS

ONCE at S. Maria de Portiuncula the holy man, considering that what has been gained by prayer often flows away through idle words spoken after prayer, ordained this remedy against the fault of idle words: 'Let every brother who utters an idle or unprofitable word be bound to own his guilt forthwith, and for each idle word to say the Lord's prayer once. And my will is, that in case he shall have been the first to blame himself for his fault, he say the Lord's prayer for his own soul; but if he have been first rebuked by another, that he apply the prayer to the soul of him that rebuked him.—2 *Cel.* 160.

S. FRANCIS PREACHES BEFORE THE SOLDAN

IN the year 1219 S. Francis, urged by the ardour of charity to seek for martyrdom, for the third time determined to sail to the country of the unbelievers in order to spread the faith of the Trinity by shedding his own blood. And taking with him Brother Illuminato and Brother Pietro dei Cattani and ten others, he crossed the sea. And as he was boldly advancing toward the camp of the Soldan he was seized on the way, and many insults were put upon him and many stripes. And as they were beating him, he cried out: 'Soldan! Soldan!' So when he was brought before the Soldan that fierce man was turned to gentleness at the sight of the man of God, and received him with respect, treated him kindly, and willingly heard him preach. But seeing that he could gain no fruit there, he determined to go back, and the Soldan ordered him to be escorted by an armed band to the Christian army then besieging the city of Damietta.—*An. Fr.* ii. 15.

THE PREACHING OF S. FRANCIS

THOUGH the evangelist Francis preached to the unlearned in homely and unlearned language, knowing as he did that virtue is more needful than words, yet among spiritual men and those of greater capacity his utterances were of wondrous depth. He would hint in a few words at what was unspeakable, and mingling ardent gestures with his words, transported his hearers wholly to heavenly things. He made no use of the keys of distinctions, because he did not lay out in order discourses which were not of his own inventing. Christ, the very Truth and Wisdom, gave to his voice the voice of power. A physician, a learned and eloquent man, once said: 'Whereas I can remember every word of other preachers, those of holy Francis alone escape me: and if I commit any of them to memory, they do not seem to me the same that dropped from his lips before.'—2 *Cel.* 107.

S. FRANCIS' CARE TO AVOID SUPERFLUITY

WITH all zeal and with all carefulness did the blessed Francis guard holy Poverty, his Lady, and in order that he might never attain to superfluity he would not allow any vessel to be found in any abode [of the brethren] if without it he could by any means avoid being subject to the extremity of need. For he used to say that it was impossible to satisfy need without yielding obedience to pleasure. He hardly ever, or most rarely, allowed himself cooked food; and if he did, he would mix it with ashes, or quench its flavour with cold water. Oh, how often, when walking through the world to preach the Gospel, if invited to dinner by great Princes (who revered him with wondrous affection) would he taste a little meat (to observe the holy Gospel), and then, making a show of eating, put his hand to his mouth and drop the remainder into his bosom, so that none might notice what he was doing!—1 *Cel.* 51.

HOW S. FRANCIS KEPT HIS BODY UNDER

WHAT shall I say as to his drinking of wine, when Francis would not even allow himself to drink his fill of water when consumed by thirst? Wherever he received hospitality he would allow no coverlet or clothes to be put over his resting-place; but the bare ground, his tunic only interposed, received his bare limbs, and when he refreshed his slight frame with sleep he would often sleep in a sitting posture, resting his head against a piece of wood or a stone, which he used for a pillow. . . . He was become unto himself as a rejected vessel, encumbered by no fear or anxiety concerning his body. He most strenuously exposed it to affronts that he might not be driven by love for it to covet any temporal thing. A true despiser of himself, he profitably instructed all by word and example to despise themselves.—1 *Cel.* 51, 52, 53.

HOW S. FRANCIS HELD HIMSELF IN CONTEMPT

FRANCIS was magnified and extolled by all, and with praiseworthy judgment; but he alone counted himself the vilest of men, he alone most fervently despised himself. For oftentimes while all men were paying him honour he was wounded by exceeding grief, and, casting out the favour of men, he would, contrariwise, get someone to rebuke him. He would call one of the brethren to him, and say: 'By thy obedience I bid thee to revile me harshly, and tell me the truth in opposition to the lies of these men.' And when that brother, though unwillingly, called him a boor and a venal and unprofitable wretch, Francis would answer, smiling, and heartily applauding him: 'The Lord bless thee because thou speakest what is most true, for such things it is meet for the son of Peter Bernardone to hear.'—1 *Cel.* 53.

S. FRANCIS' HUMILITY IN RESIGNING HIS OFFICE OF MINISTER-GENERAL

IN order to observe the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion, Francis, in a chapter-general in the presence of all the brethren of the Order, resigned the office of Superior in these words: 'Henceforth I am dead to you; but here,' he said, 'is Brother Peter dei Cattani, and let you and I all obey him.' Whereupon he bowed down before him and promised him obedience and reverence. The brethren therefore began to weep, and grief drew loud wailings from them when they saw themselves in some sort orphaned of such a father. Then the blessed Francis arose, clasped his hands, and said, raising his eyes to heaven: 'O Lord, I commend to Thee the family that Thou hast hitherto committed to me; and now, because of the infirmities which thou knowest, sweetest Lord, being unable to take care of it, I entrust it to the Ministers. Be they bound to give account to Thee in the day of judgment, if any brother perish through their negligence or example or harsh correction.' Thenceforth he remained in subjection until death, behaving with greater humility than any of the other brethren.—2 *Cel.* 143.

THE FIRST BRETHREN SENT TO GERMANY

BROTHER John of Penna was sent to Germany with some sixty brethren, who came to their appointed province ignorant of the language. When asked if they wanted food, lodging, etc., they assented by saying *ja* (an adverb of affirmation), and their needs were supplied. When those simple brethren perceived this [thinking], that the word stood in some sort for compassion, they determined to answer *ja* to every question they were asked. And so when certain people asked them in German whether they were heretics come to taint Germany with the pestilent heresy wherewith some had tainted Lombardy, they answered '*ja*,' thinking, perhaps, that they were being asked if they wanted to eat or drink. Therefore some of them were beaten, others bound in chains, others dragged naked to the dance, and all, after being ill-treated, were sent away, and quickly departed from that land. Seeing, therefore, that they should gain no fruit in Germany, they returned to Italy, and hence it was deemed that Germany was peopled by men of such savage ferocity that none of the brethren wished to be sent thither except such as had a fervent longing for martyrdom.—*An. Fr.* ii. 11.

S. FRANCIS' VISION OF THE HEN AND CHICKENS

FRANCIS had seen in a vision, as it were, a little black hen, with feathers on her legs, and feet like those of a tame dove, and she had so many chicks that she could not gather them under her own wings, but they went about around her, remaining outside: When he awoke he began to think about this manner of vision, and forthwith knew by the Holy Ghost that he himself was figuratively designated by that hen. And he said: 'I am that hen, small in stature, and black by nature, and I ought to be simple as a dove, and flying to heaven with the winged love of the virtues. And the Lord of His mercy has given and will give me many sons whom I shall not be able to protect by my own strength. Wherefore it behoves me to commend them to Holy Church, that she may protect and govern them beneath the shadow of her wings.' And a few years after this vision he went to Rome, and visited the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, who bade him go with him next morning to the Court, for that he desired him to preach before the Lord Pope and Cardinals, and recommend his Order to them.—3 *Soc.* 63, 64.

S. FRANCIS' VISION OF THE CRUMBS

AT the time when the brethren were conferring together touching the confirmation of the Rule, S. Francis, who was very anxious about this matter, saw the following vision: It seemed to him that he had gathered from the ground tiny crumbs of bread, which he had to distribute to many famished brethren standing round him. And as he dreaded to distribute such minute crumbs, fearing lest such fine dust should fall out of his hands, there came a voice from on high, which cried, 'Francis, make one host out of all the crumbs, and give it to eat to all who will.' Which when he did, those who received not the gift devoutly, or despised it when they had received it, presently appeared branded with the taint of leprosy. In the morning he related all these things to the brethren, grieving that he could not understand the mystery of the vision. But soon afterwards, as he was watching in prayer, this voice came to him from heaven: 'Francis, the crumbs of the past night are the words of the Gospel, the host is the Rule, the leprosy is wickedness.'—2 *Cel.* 209.

S. FRANCIS ADDRESSES POPE HONORIUS III. AND HIS CARDINALS

ONCE when Francis had come to Rome on business of his Order, he greatly longed to speak before Pope Honorius and the venerable Cardinals. When the Bishop of Ostia, who revered the holy man of God with singular affection, heard this, he was filled with apprehension as well as joy, admiring the fervour of the man of God, and beholding his simple purity. But trusting in the mercy of the Almighty, he brought Francis into the presence of the Pope and the Cardinals, and Francis, having received [the Pope's] permission and blessing, began boldly to speak. And such was the fervour of his spirit as he spoke that, unable to contain himself for joy, as he uttered the words with his mouth, he moved his feet as if dancing, not as in wantonness, but as glowing with the fire of Divine love ; not provoking laughter, but extorting tears of grief. For many of them were pricked at the heart as they wondered at God's grace and the steadfastness of the man. But the Bishop of Ostia was in an agony of suspense, praying to God with all his might that they should not despise the blessed man's simplicity.—1 *Cel.* 73.

S. FRANCIS ASKS POPE HONORIUS III. TO APPOINT THE CARDINAL OF OSTIA PROTECTOR OF HIS ORDER

[AFTER preaching before Pope Honorius III. and the Cardinals], Francis addressed the Pope in these words: 'Lord, I have compassion on you for the anxiety and continual toil wherewith you must needs keep watch for the Church of God, and I am much ashamed that you should have so much care and anxiety on account of us Lesser Brethren. For whereas many nobles and rich men and very many Religious cannot come in to you, we, who are poorer and more despised than other Religious, ought to feel great shame and fear not only to come in to your presence, but even to stand before your door, and presume to knock at the tabernacle of the Christians. Wherefore I humbly and devoutly beseech your Holiness that you would deign to grant us this lord of Ostia for our father, that the brethren may resort to him in time of need, saving always your pre-eminent dignity.' And this petition was pleasing to the Pope, and he granted the said lord of Ostia to Francis, setting him as a most worthy protector over the Order.—3 *Soc.* 65.

S. FRANCIS BEGS ALMS OF THE BRETHREN

ON the chief festivals, when opportunity occurred, S. Francis was wont to beg for alms, saying that in the holy poor was fulfilled that word of the prophet, 'Man did eat the bread of angels'; for he called that bread angels' bread which holy Poverty gathers from door to door, and is sought for the love of God, and given at the prompting of the blessed angels for love of Him. And so once when on Easter Day he was abiding in a hermitage so remote from the dwellings of men that he could not conveniently beg, mindful of Him who appeared on that day to the disciples going to Emmaus in the guise of a stranger, S. Francis asked alms from the brethren themselves as a poor stranger. And when he had humbly accepted the alms, he taught them how, passing through the wilderness of the world as strangers and pilgrims and true Hebrews, they should ever celebrate the Lord's Passover—that is, the passage from this world to the Father—in poverty of spirit.—*Bonaventura* vii. 8.

THE OBEDIENCE OF BROTHER WILLIAM OF ESSEBY

AMONG the brethren who first landed in England on September 10, 1224, was William of Esseby, an Englishman by birth, and still wearing the hood of a novice. He persevered meritoriously for a long time in various employments, aided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and left us an example of humility, poverty, charity, gentleness, obedience, and patience. When brother Gregory, the Minister in France, asked him if he would like to go to England, he replied that he did not know whether he wished to or not. When the Minister wondered at this answer, brother William said at last 'that he knew not what he wished, because his will was not his own, but the Minister's; and so he willed whatever the Minister willed that he should will.' Brother William of Nottingham bore witness to William of Esseby's being most obedient; for, on being offered by the former his choice of a place of residence, he said that place pleased him best which it should please the other to assign to him. And because his manners were very gentle and caressing, he caused many lay-people to love the Order. —*Eccleston, Coll.* i.

WHEN the brethren who first came to England had separated and gone to different places, there came some, whom the Spirit of Jesus had led thereto, seeking admission to the Order. The first of these to be received was a young man of good disposition and very distinguished appearance, brother Solomon; and he used to tell me that while still a novice he was made steward, and came to his sister's house to ask alms. She brought him some bread, but turned her face away, saying, 'Cursed be the hour I ever saw thee!' But he took the bread with joy, and went away. Now, he held so strictly to the pattern of the most sparing poverty which he had set before himself that whenever he was carrying for the use of some sick brother flour and salt in his hood or a few figs, and firewood under his arm, he took the utmost care not to accept or keep anything beyond the limits of the most stringent necessity. And once it happened that he endured such cold that he thought he should die on the spot. The brethren had no means whereby they might warm him, but holy Charity pointed out a kindly expedient, and they all came round him and warmed him by pressing their breasts against him, just as pigs do.—*Eccleston, Coll.* iii.

THE LAUGHING BROTHER AT OXFORD

THE first brethren in England were at all times so merry and joyful together that a dumb man beholding them could scarce refrain from laughter. And so when the young brethren at Oxford laughed too often, one of them was ordered to be scourged every time he laughed. Now, it happened that after he had received many stripes in one day, and yet could not help laughing, one night he thought he saw all the convent assembled in the choir, and when the brethren as usual attempted to laugh, a figure of the Crucified which stood at the door turned toward them, as if alive, and said: 'The sons of Korah are they who at the time of chanting laugh or sleep.' It seemed to him also that the figure tried to withdraw its hands from the cross, as if it would come down and go away; whereupon the Superior of the convent went up at once and fixed in the nails, so that the figure did not come down. This vision having been made known, the brethren received a timely fright, and behaved without laughing to excess.—*Eccleston, Coll.* iv.

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EXHORTATIONS TO HUMILITY AND MEEKNESS

* 'I CAME not to be ministered unto, but to minister,' saith the Lord. Let those who are set over others glory in such pre-eminence just as much as if they had been appointed to wash their brethren's feet; and the more it would hurt them to be deprived of their dignity rather than to be deprived of the office of washing their brethren's feet, the more are they storing treasure to the peril of the soul.—*Opusc.* 60.

* NOTHING should be irksome to the servant of God except sin; and in whatsoever way anyone should sin, if the servant of God should be vexed or angry thereat, save in charity, he treasures up for himself wrath and guilt. The servant of God is he who is not angry nor vexed about anything, who lives uprightly, and without anything of his own. And blessed is he who keeps back nothing for himself, 'rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'—*Opusc.* 66.

S. FRANCIS GIVES THE BRETHREN AN OBJECT-LESSON

ONE Easter Day the brethren at the hermitage of Greccio laid the table more carefully than usual, with white table-linen and glass vessels. The father came down from the cell, went to the table, and noticed that it was placed on high and decked in vain fashion. Stealthily he withdrew, put on his head the hat of a poor man who was there, and went out of doors, carrying the man's stick in his hand. He waited outside the door for the brethren to begin; for they used not to wait for him when he did not come at the signal. When they began to eat, that true poor man cried at the door: 'For the love of God give alms to this poor sick pilgrim.' The brethren answered: 'Come in, good man, for the love of Him whom thou hast invoked.' He came in at once, and appeared before them as they were eating. What, think you, was the amazement the pilgrim caused to the inhabitants? They gave him a dish, at his request, and, sitting alone on the ground [by the fire], he made the ashes his table, saying, '*Now* I am sitting like a Lesser Brother;' then to the brethren: 'The example of the poverty of the Son of God should constrain us more than any other Religious. I saw a table spread and adorned, and knew that it was not the table of poor men who go from door to door.'—2 *Cel.* 61.

* O QUEEN WISDOM, the Lord save thee, with thy sister, holy, pure Simplicity! Holy Lady Poverty, the Lord save thee, with thy sister, holy Humility! Holy Lady Charity, the Lord save thee, with thy sister, holy Obedience! All ye most holy Virtues, the Lord save you, from whom you proceed and come! There is no man in all the world that can have one of you unless he die first. Whoso has one and offends not the others has all; and whoso offends one has none, and offends all; and each virtue puts vices and sins to confusion. Holy Wisdom confounds Satan and all his wiles. Pure, holy Simplicity confounds all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh. Holy Poverty confounds greed, avarice, and the cares of this world. Holy Humility confounds pride, and all the men of this world, and all things that are in the world. Holy Charity confounds all the temptations of the Devil and the flesh, and all fleshly fears. Holy Obedience confounds all bodily and fleshly desires, and holds her body mortified that it may obey the Spirit and obey its brother, and makes a man subject to all the men of this world; and not to men alone, but to all beasts and wild creatures, so that they may do with him what they will so far as it shall have been given them from above by the Lord.—*Opusc.* 78.

STORY OF THE ROBINS FED BY S. FRANCIS

ONE day the blessed Francis was sitting at table with the brethren, when two little birds, cock and hen, came up, eager about the bringing-up of their new-born chicks, and took away crumbs from the holy man's table. So they did every day afterwards. The holy man took pleasure in them, made them welcome (as he was wont), and offered them grain [which he had got] on purpose. After a while the father and mother offered their chicks to the brethren, as having been reared at their cost; and having done so, did not appear in that place any more. The young birds became very familiar with the brethren; they would sit on their hands, and dwelt in the house, not as guests, but as if they were at home. They shunned the sight of lay-folk, and professed themselves nurslings of the brethren only.—2 *Cel.* 47.

STORY OF THE ROBINS FED BY S. FRANCIS
(continued)

WHEN the holy man noticed how tame the young birds had become, he was astonished, and invited the brethren to rejoice. 'Look, brethren,' said he, 'at what our brothers the redbreasts have done: just as if they were gifted with reason! For they have said, "See, brothers, we present you with our chicks who have been fed with your crumbs: do with them what you will. We betake ourselves to another home."' So the little birds made themselves quite at home with the brethren, and took their food peaceably. But greed broke up their concord . . . for when the biggest had eaten as much as he wanted he drove the rest away from the food. 'See,' said Francis, 'what this greedy bird is doing. Though full and satisfied himself, he grudges against his hungry brothers: he will come to a bad end yet!' The punishment followed instantly on the holy man's words. The disturber of his brethren went up on a vessel of water to drink, and immediately fell in and was drowned; nor was any cat or other beast found who durst touch the creature cursed by the Saint. Horrible indeed is greed among men when it is thus punished in birds!—2 *Cel.* 47.

ADMONITION AGAINST BOASTING

* CONSIDER, O man, in what excellence God has set thee, for He created and fashioned thee as to the body after the image of His well-beloved Son, and as to the spirit after His likeness. And all the creatures that are under heaven, in their own measure, serve, acknowledge, and obey their Creator better than thou; and it was not the devils that crucified Him, but thou with them didst crucify Him, and dost still crucify Him by taking pleasure in vices and sins. What, then, canst thou boast of? For if thou wert so subtle and so wise as to have all knowledge, and couldst interpret all kinds of tongues, and pry with subtlety into celestial things, thou couldst not boast of any of these things, for one devil knew more of heavenly things and now knows more of earthly things than all men, though there was one man who received from the Lord special knowledge of the supreme wisdom. In like manner, if thou wert fairer and richer than all, and couldst even work wonders, so as to put devils to flight, all these things are contrary to thy nature and in nowise belong to thee, and in them thou mayest not boast. But herein, in our infirmities we may boast, and bear daily the holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Opusc.* 60.

THE GODLY BEHAVIOUR OF THE FIRST BRETHREN IN ENGLAND

THE first ordinance that S. Francis made after the sealed Rule was that when the brethren were among lay-folk they should only eat three mouthfuls at one time, just to fulfil the injunction of the Holy Gospel; because a report had reached him that the brethren ate greedily. The brethren were wont to keep silence until Tierce, and to be so assiduous in prayer that there was scarce an hour throughout the night when there was not someone at prayer in the oratory. . . . There had sprung up among them the godly custom not to swear at all, but only to say, 'Know ye.' Whenever one was questioned by his Superior or by his companion, he answered forthwith. 'My fault,' and often also prostrated himself. Accordingly, brother Jordan, a doctor among the Preachers, said that the Devil had once appeared to him and told him that 'My fault' had robbed him of all he thought to gain among the Lesser Brethren, for that they owned their faults to one another, if one had wronged another.—*Eccleston, Coll.* iv.

S. FRANCIS GIVES ALMS TO AN OLD WOMAN

WHILST he was dwelling at S. Maria de Portiuncula, a poor old woman who had two sons in the Order came to the place asking alms of S. Francis. He at once said to brother Peter dei Cattani, who was at that time the Minister-General: 'Can we have something to give to this our mother?' For he used to say that the mother of any brother was his own mother and the mother of all the brethren. Brother Peter answered: 'There is nothing in the house that we can give her, for she needs such alms as may enable her to get sustenance for her body; and in the Church we only have one New Testament in which we read the lessons at Matins.' For at that time the brethren had no breviaries and not many psalters. So S. Francis said to him: 'Give the Testament to our mother that she may sell it for her need; for I firmly believe that this will be more pleasing to the Lord and to the Blessed Virgin than if we were to read in it.' And so he gave it her.—*S. P.* 38.

S. FRANCIS' LOVE TO GOD'S CREATURES

WHO could tell the sweetness which Francis enjoyed in contemplating in His creatures the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator? Truly such thoughts often filled him with wondrous and unspeakable joy as he beheld the sun, the moon, the stars, and the firmament. O simple piety! O pious simplicity! Even towards little worms he glowed with exceeding love, because he had read that word concerning the Saviour: 'I am a worm, and no man.' Wherefore he used to pick them up in the way and put them in a safe place, that they might not be crushed by the feet of passers-by. What shall I say of other lower creatures, when in winter he would provide honey or the best wine for bees, that they might not perish from cold? And he used to extol, to the glory of the Lord, the efficacy of their works and the excellence of their skill with such abundant utterance that many times he would pass a day in praise of them and of the other creatures.—1 *Cel.* 80.

S. FRANCIS' JOY IN GOD'S CREATURES

AS of old the three children placed in the burning fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify the Creator of the universe, so this man, full of the spirit of God, ceased not to glorify, praise, and bless in all the elements and creatures the Creator and Governor of them all. What gladness thinkest thou the beauty of flowers afforded to his mind as he observed the grace of their form and perceived the sweetness of their perfume? For he turned the eye of consideration to the beauty of that Flower which, brightly coming forth in spring-time from the root of Jesse, has by its perfume raised up countless thousands of the dead. And when he came upon a great quantity of flowers he would preach to them and invite them to praise the Lord, just as if they had been gifted with reason. . . . He called all creatures by the name of brother, and in a surpassing manner, of which other men had no experience, he discerned the hidden things of creation with the eye of the heart, as one who had already escaped into the liberty of the children of glory.—1 *Cel.* 80, 81.

S. FRANCIS' LOVE FOR FIRE

AMONG all the lower and insensible creatures, S. Francis had a singular affection for fire, because of its beauty and usefulness; wherefore he would never hinder it from doing its office. For once, while he was sitting near the fire, his drawers caught fire about the knee, without his being aware, and though he felt the heat, he would not put the fire out. But his companion ran to him, seeing his clothes burning, intending to quench the fire. But Francis forbade him, saying: 'Do not, dearest brother—do not harm the fire!' And so he would by no means have it put out. His companion hastened to the brother who was Francis' Warden, and brought him to Francis; and the Warden, against Francis' will, put the fire out. . . . Nor did Francis like a brother to throw fire or smoking wood about from one place to another, as is commonly done, but he wished it to be put gently on the ground, out of reverence for Him whose creature it is.—*S. P.* 116.

A LETTER TO ALL MAGISTRATES, CONSULS, ETC.

"TO all the Magistrates, Consuls, Judges, and Rulers everywhere on earth, and to all to whom this letter shall come, brother Francis, your servant in the Lord, lowly and despised, desiring salvation and peace for all of you.

Behold and consider, for the day of death draweth nigh. I therefore beseech you with reverence, so far as I may, not to forget the Lord and turn aside from His commandments by reason of the cares and anxieties of this world, which you have. For all they who forget Him and turn aside from His commandments are cursed, and shall be forgotten of Him: and when the day of death shall come all the things which they thought to have shall be taken away from them; and the greater their wisdom and their power have been in this world, the greater will be the torments they shall suffer in hell. Wherefore I earnestly advise you, my lords, to put aside all care and anxiety, and to receive with meekness the most holy Body and the most holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy remembrance of Him. And pay ye such honour to the Lord among the people committed to you as to make proclamation every evening by messenger or other sign, that praise and thanksgiving be rendered by all the people unto the Lord God Almighty. But if you do not do this, know that you shall give account thereof before Jesus Christ your Lord God at the day of judgment.—*Epist.* xv. (*Opusc.* 50).

BROTHER PETER AND THE NOVICE

BROTHER PETER the Spaniard, Warden of Northampton, had a novice in his convent who was tempted to leave the Order, and it was all he could do to get the novice to go with him to the [Provincial] Minister. As they were on their way, brother Peter began to preach to the novice on the virtue of holy obedience. A certain wild bird chanced to go before them as they walked along. So the novice (Stephen by name) said to brother Peter: 'Brother, if what thou tellest me is true, bid me by virtue of obedience to catch yonder bird; and let it wait for me.' And when brother Peter had bidden him, the bird at once stood still, and the novice came up, held it, and did what he pleased with it; whereupon all his temptation was done away, and God gave him a new heart, and he at once returned to Northampton and made his profession to persevere [in the Order], and afterwards he became a great preacher.—*Eccleston, Coll.* v.

THE SIGN OF A LUKEWARM SPIRIT

DEAREST brethren, when pleasure points out as a necessity what reason does not demand, it is a manifest token of the spirit's being quenched. For when the spirit is lukewarm and gradually growing cold in grace, the flesh and blood needs must seek the things that are their own. For when the soul is lacking in spiritual enjoyments what remains but that the flesh should turn to its own enjoyments? And then the animal appetite puts forward the palliation of necessity; then the feelings of the flesh fashion the conscience. If my brother has a real want and forthwith hastens to satisfy it, what reward shall he receive? For he had the opportunity of deserving well, but he deliberately proved that he did not like to profit by it; for not to bear one's wants patiently is nothing else but to turn back to Egypt.—*Opusc.* 248.

S. FRANCIS' LESSON TO A DISOBEDIENT BROTHER

S. FRANCIS once ordered a disobedient brother to be stripped of all his garments, thrown into a deep pit, and buried. As the brethren, at the command of the man of God, were casting the earth over him, and when now his head alone remained unburied, the tender father came up and said: 'Art thou dead, brother? Art thou dead?' The brother, penitent for his disobedience, answered: 'Yes, father; I am dead now.' 'Arise,' said Francis, 'if thou art truly dead, and obey thy Superior's nod, as thou oughtest, nor withstand orders in anything, even as a dead man resists in nothing. I would have my followers dead, not living.'—*Opusc.* 404.

A BROTHER WARNED AGAINST FALSE HUMILITY

AS two of the brethren were on the way from Terra di Lavoro to visit the holy father, the elder of them was in several things a cause of scandal to the younger. When S. Francis asked the younger how his companion had behaved toward him on the way, he answered: 'Oh, very well indeed.' 'Beware, my brother,' replied S. Francis, 'of telling a lie from false humility, for I know—I know what happened; but wait a little, and thou shalt see.' The younger wondered how the sin of his companion became known to the man of God. But the elder, being hardened, repented not of what he had done, and not many days afterwards bade farewell to the Order.—*Opusc.* 400.

A PRAYER OF S. FRANCIS

*O ALMIGHTY, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant unto us for Thy sake to do what we know to be Thy will, and ever to will what is pleasing to Thee, that we, being cleansed and enlightened within, and kindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, may follow the footsteps of Thy dearly beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and of Thy grace alone attain unto Thee the Most High, who in perfect Trinity and undivided Unity livest and reignest in glory God Almighty, world without end. Amen.—*Opusc.* 90.

A WARNING AGAINST THE FLESH

THE flesh is man's greatest foe; it knows not how to call to mind past evil, in order to grieve over it, nor to look forward to future evil, in order to dread it. Its object is to use up the present; and, what is worse, it claims all good things for itself, and wrests them to its own glory. It shamelessly claims for itself what has been given, not to it, but to the soul. It snatches at praise for virtue and at outward favour for prayers and watchings, leaving nothing to the soul, and it seeks to make money even out of its tears.—*Opusc.* 454.

S. FRANCIS' REVERENCE FOR RELICS

S. FRANCIS showed himself most attentive to Divine worship, and left nothing that pertains to God dishonoured by neglect. When he was at Monte Casale, in the province of Massa, he bade the brethren reverently to remove the sacred relics from an abandoned church to a convent of the brethren, for he was deeply grieved that they should for a long time have been defrauded of their due devotion. But having been obliged to go to another place, his sons, heedless of their father's bidding, neglected the merit of obedience. One day when they were preparing to celebrate, they removed the cloth from the altar, as is customary, and found thereon fair and fragrant bones. The Saint of God returned soon after and asked if they had done his bidding concerning the relics: they humbly confessed their negligence. He forgave them, and said: 'Blessed be the Lord my God, who Himself has fulfilled that which ye ought to have done.'—2 *Cel.* 202.

S. FRANCIS' EMOTION ON HEARING THE WORDS 'THE LOVE OF GOD'

THOUGH as a man who enjoyed the unction of the Spirit S. Francis was devout in all things, still he felt a special emotion with regard to certain special things. Among other expressions in common use he could never hear the words 'the love of God' without undergoing a kind of transformation; for immediately on hearing those words he was aroused, stirred, inflamed, as though some inner chord of his heart were being touched by the plectrum of an outward voice. He declared that to offer such payment as 'the love of God' in exchange for alms was a noble prodigality, and that those who valued it at less than money were most foolish. For himself, he kept unfailingly until his death the resolution he had made while yet mixed up with the things of the world, never to refuse any poor man who asked him for anything for the love of God.—2 *Cel.* 196.

OF THE DWELLINGS OF THE BRETHREN

S. FRANCIS said: 'When the brethren go to any city where they have no dwelling and find anyone willing to give them enough land for them to build one and to have a garden and all that is necessary, they ought first to consider how much land may be sufficient for them, ever having regard to poverty and the good example we are bound to show in all things. . . . So having considered the land necessary for a dwelling, the brethren should go to the Bishop of the city and say to him: "My lord, So-and-so will give us so much land for the love of God and for the salvation of his soul, that we may build a dwelling there. Wherefore we come to you first because you are the father and lord of the souls of all the flock committed to you, and of all our brethren abiding in this place: we wish, therefore, to build there with God's blessing and yours. . . ." Then, having obtained the Bishop's blessing, let them go and get a great ditch put round the land they have received as the site for their dwelling, and put a good hedge there instead of a wall, as a token of holy poverty and humility. Then let them get small houses made of clay and wattle, and some cells wherein the brethren may at times pray, and work, for greater decorum and for the avoiding of idleness.' —*S. P.* 10.

S. FRANCIS' EXPOSITION OF THREE OF THE BEATITUDES

*'BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Many there are who apply themselves to prayers and services and fast and afflict their bodies much, but are immediately scandalized and hurt at a single word which they feel as a personal slight, or at anything being taken away from them. These are not truly poor in spirit, for that he who is truly poor in spirit hates himself and loves those who smite him on the cheek.

'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called children of God.' They are truly peace-makers who in all the things they suffer in this world for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ keep peace in mind and body.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' They are truly pure in heart who despise earthly and seek for heavenly things, and never cease to worship and behold the living and true Lord God with pure heart and mind.—*Opusc.* 68.

BROTHER GILES, THE QUAIL, AND THE DOVE

ONCE when brother Giles heard a quail and a dove, he said in fervour of spirit: 'O lady quail, I will come to thee to listen to the praises of the Lord. I will remember that thou sayest not *la, la*, but thou sayest *qua, qua*; as if thou saidst, not there (*là*), in another life, but here, here (*qua*), be it thy study to do meritorious actions.' O sister dove, what a beautiful lament thou makest! O sinner, what wilt thou do? for thou wilt not learn it!'—*An. Fr.* iii. 86.

BROTHER GILES ENCOURAGES A TEMPTED BROTHER

A CERTAIN brother who was beset by a temptation, and had frequently prayed to the Lord that He would take it away without having obtained his request, went to Brother Giles and asked his advice. 'Wonder not, brother,' was his answer, 'if the Lord, from whom thou hast received so many graces, would have thee fight against the foe, for the better a King arms his knights the more bravely would he have them wage war.'—*Ib.* 93.

OF S. FRANCIS' CONVERSE WITH WOMEN

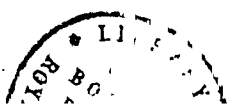
WHEN in speaking he encountered the troublesome loquacity of women, Francis, with downcast face and short words, would call on them to be silent; sometimes, on the other hand, with his eyes fixed on heaven, he seemed to be drawing thence the answers he gave to those who were muttering of earth. But those women in whose minds a holy urgency of devotion had placed the abode of wisdom he taught with wondrous but brief discourses. Whenever he spoke with a woman, he uttered what he had to say in a tone loud enough to be heard by all. Once he said to his companion: 'I tell thee the truth, dearest brother, that there are two women only whose faces I should recognise if I looked at them. The face of such an one,' he added, 'and of such an one, is known to me; but that of no other.' 'It is well, Father,' answered his companion, 'for the sight of them makes no one holy.'—2 *Cel.* 112.

S. FRANCIS' CARE FOR THE POOR LADIES AT S. DAMIAN

AFTER the virgins of Christ had begun to gather from different parts of the world at S. Damian, vowing most perfectly to observe the deepest poverty, and to adorn themselves with every virtue, though S. Francis their father gradually withdrew his bodily presence from them, still he ever extended to them his affectionate care in the Holy Ghost. For when by many tokens of perfection he knew them to be approved and ready to bear the loss of all things for Christ, and to endure toil, and never to decline from the holy commandments, he promised ever to bestow the help and counsel of himself and his brethren on them and on others who should profess poverty in a similar way of life; which thing he diligently performed as long as he lived, and, when nigh unto death, commanded to be evermore performed, and that not negligently, declaring that it was one and the same spirit that had led the brethren and those Poor Ladies forth from this world.—2 *Cel.* 204.

S. FRANCIS' INJUNCTIONS AS TO MINISTERING TO THE POOR LADIES AT S. DAMIAN

WHEN the brethren sometimes wondered why S. Francis did not more frequently visit those holy handmaids of Christ with his bodily presence, 'Think not, dear brethren,' said he, 'that I love them not perfectly; for if it were a fault to cherish them in Christ, was it not a greater fault to have united them to Christ? And, indeed, it had been no wrong not to call them, but not to care for them when called were the utmost unkindness. But I am giving you an example, that as I am doing, so ye should also do. I will not that any of you should of his own accord offer to visit them; but I order that unwilling and most reluctant men, provided they be spiritual and approved by a long and worthy life, be appointed for their service.'—2 *Cel.* 205.



S. FRANCIS' SERMON TO THE POOR LADIES

[S. FRANCIS, while staying at S. Damian, had often been entreated to preach to his spiritual daughters, and at last consented to do so]. When they had assembled in the accustomed manner to hear the Word of God (but not less in order to see their father Francis), he raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart ever was, and began to pray to Christ. Then he ordered ashes to be brought, and having spread some of them on the ground in a circle round him, placed the remainder on his head. They waited for him to begin, but as he remained in persistent silence within the circle of ashes, a great amazement arose in their hearts. Then he suddenly stood up, and, to their astonishment, repeated by way of sermon the psalm, 'Have mercy on me, O God,' and having finished it, went out in haste. By the power of this symbolic preaching the handmaids of God were filled with such contrition that they shed abundant tears, and scarce refrained from punishing themselves with their own hands.—2 *Cel.* 207.

THE BRETHREN EXHORTED TO BEWARE OF ASSOCIATING WITH WOMEN

THE looks and talk of women and intimacy with them are an occasion of falling to many, and we, dearest brethren, ought the more carefully to avoid them the oftener we see the weak spirit overthrown and the strong weakened by such things. Except in the case of the most approved man, I judge it to be as easy for anyone associating with women to avoid their contagion as (in Scriptural phrase) to walk in the fire and not burn the soles of his feet. Nor do I think it safe to make inward pictures of their appearance, for these may either revive the fire of the flesh which has been subdued, or stain the whiteness of a modest mind. All talk with women is entirely worthless except only the case of confession or such brief instruction as is expedient for salvation and consistent with propriety. What dealings, I should like to know, can one have with a woman in Religion except when she makes a religious request for holy penance or for counsel as to a better life? Over-confidence makes one less careful of the foe, and if the Devil can win as much as a single hair in a man, he soon makes it grow into a beam. Not only ought fleshly vices to be done to death and incentives to them curbed, but it is meet to guard with utmost watchfulness the outward senses through which death gains entrance to the soul.—*Opusc.* 242.

EXAMPLE OF S. FRANCIS' CAUTION IN HIS DEALING WITH WOMEN

IT happened once, when S. Francis was on his way to Bevagna, that he was unable to reach the place, being weak from fasting. His companion sent a messenger to a certain spiritual lady to ask humbly for bread and wine for the holy man. As soon as she heard of his need, she ran to him with her daughter (a virgin consecrated to God), bringing what was necessary. After the holy man had been refreshed and was somewhat recovered, he in his turn refreshed the mother and daughter with the Word of God; but, though he preached to them, he looked at neither in the face. As they withdrew, his companion said to him: 'Brother, why didst thou not look at the holy virgin who came to thee with so much devotion?' He answered: 'Who should not fear to look upon the bride of Christ? But if one can preach with the eyes and the face, she saw me, though I did not see her.'—*2 Cel.* 114.

STORY OF S. CLARA BLESSING THE LOAVES

POPE GREGORY IX. visited S. Clara's monastery that he might hear heavenly and divine words from her. While they were talking together, S. Clara had had loaves made ready on all the tables for the sisters, and, having finished their conversation, S. Clara besought the Pope on her knees to bless the loaves. But he answered: 'Most faithful Sister Clara, I would have thee bless these loaves by making the sign of the cross over them.' 'Forgive me, most holy father,' she said; 'for herein I were much to be blamed if I, a worthless woman, presumed to give a blessing in this wise in the presence of Christ's Vicar.' The Pope answered: 'Well then, that it be not set down to presumption, and, further, that merit may be thine, I bid thee by holy obedience to bless these loaves by making with thine hand the sign of the Cross.' She, like a truly obedient daughter, raised her hands in blessing, and made the sign of the Cross in the air over against the loaves, when forthwith the sign of the Cross appeared on all those loaves, some of which were devoutly eaten, and others put by, on account of the miracle.—*An. Fr.* iii. 182.

BROTHER GILES ON THE FEAR OF GOD

THE holy fear of God orders, governs, and rules the soul, and makes it enter into grace. If one possesses any grace or divine virtue, it is the fear of God that preserves it. And if one have not yet acquired virtue or grace, holy fear makes him acquire it. The holy fear of God is a guide to the divine graces, because it makes the soul wherein it dwells quickly attain to holy virtue and the divine graces. None of the creatures that have ever fallen into sin would have fallen had they had the holy fear of God. But this holy gift of fear is not given except to the perfect, because the more perfect a man is, the more fearing and the humbler he is. Happy is the man who knows that in this world he is in a prison, and ever remembers how grievously he has offended his Lord. Man ought ever to fear pride, lest it thrust at him, and make him fall from the state of grace wherein he is; for man can never be secure while he is in the midst of our enemies—namely, the flatteries of this wretched world and our own flesh, which, together with the devils, is ever the soul's enemy.—*Fioretti* 240.

BROTHER GILES AND THE DOCTOR OF DIVINITY

FORASMUCH as brother Giles greatly delighted in the virtue of humility, he desired to have experience of it in another; and once when a certain English brother, a Doctor of Divinity, was preaching at the monastery of S. Damian in the presence of S. Clara and brother Giles, and had not proceeded very far in his sermon, brother Giles cried out with fervour: 'Hold thy peace, Master, hold thy peace, because I want to preach.' The other at once was silent, and brother Giles, in fervour of spirit, uttered words of God sweet as honey. After a while he said: 'Now, brother, finish the sermon thou hast begun.' So the doctor resumed and concluded his sermon. But when blessed Clara saw it, she exulted in spirit, saying: 'To-day has been fulfilled the desire of our holy father Francis, who once said to me, "I greatly long that my clerical brethren may attain to such humility that a Doctor of Divinity shall leave off preaching at the voice of a layman wanting to preach." I tell you, brethren, that this Doctor has edified me more than if I had seen him raising the dead.' —*An. Fr.* iii. 81.

THE DUTY OF SHOWING A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE

SO much did Francis love a man full of spiritual joy that he had these words written down for a general admonition: 'Let the brethren beware of showing themselves outwardly sullen and gloomy hypocrites, but let them show themselves rejoicing in the Lord, merry, and joyful, and gracious, as is meet.' By joy of countenance he meant fervour, zeal, readiness and preparation of mind and body gladly to do every good thing, for that by such fervour and readiness others are more provoked [to good] than by the good deed itself. Nay, if a deed, however good, seem not to be done gladly and fervently, it rather produces distaste than provokes to good. And so he disliked seeing in a face that gloom which often stands for spiritual sloth, disinclination of mind, and sluggishness of body as regards every good work. But he specially loved seriousness and restraint in the countenance and all the members of the body and in the senses in himself and in others, and tried to lead others thereto by precept and example to the utmost of his power.—2 *Cel.* 128; *S. P.* 96.

BROTHER GILES ON HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

HE who with steadfast humility and patience, for the fervent love of God suffers and endures tribulations shall soon attain to great graces and virtues, and shall be lord of this world, and shall have an earnest of the glorious world to come. Everything, good or bad, that a man does, he does unto himself; be not, therefore, offended against him that does thee wrong, but have humble patience, and only grieve over his sin, pitying him, and praying effectually to God for him. By how much a man is strong to endure and suffer wrongs and tribulations patiently for the love of God, by so much, and no more, is he great in God's sight; and by how much he is weak in enduring griefs and adversities for the love of God, by so much is he less in God's sight. —*Fioretti* 241, 242.

S. FRANCIS AT THE SIEGE OF DAMIETTA

AT the time when the army of the Christians was besieging Damietta, Francis and some of his companions were there, for they had crossed the sea in their ardour for martyrdom. And one day, when our soldiers were preparing for battle, the holy man heard of it, and was exceedingly grieved, and said to his companion: 'If they fight to-day the Lord hath showed me that the Christians will not prosper. But if I tell them this I shall be deemed a fool, while if I keep silence I shall not elude my conscience. What, then, thinkest thou?' His companion answered: 'Make no account of being judged by men, for thou art not now first beginning to be deemed a fool. Discharge thy conscience, and fear God rather than men.' So Francis gave salutary warning to the Christians, urging them not to fight, and announcing disaster if they did. But they hardened their hearts, and would not be warned. . . . During the battle Francis, being in suspense, made his companion go up three times to watch, . . . and at the third time the Christian army was in full flight.—2 *Cel.* 30.

THE WOOING AND ESPOUSAL OF LADY POVERTY

PLACED in the vale of tears, the blessed father Francis set at naught the common paltry wealth of the sons of men, and in his ambition to attain a more exalted height longed after Poverty with all his heart. Considering that she was the familiar friend of the Son of God, he strove in perpetual charity to espouse her, now that she was cast off by all the world. Therefore, having become a lover of her beauty, in order that he might cleave yet closer to her as his wife, and that they two might be united in one spirit, not only did he leave his father and his mother, but even put all things from him. Therefore, he clasped her with chaste embraces, nor for an hour did he endure not to be her husband. . . . No one was so greedy of gold as he of Poverty, no one more careful in guarding a treasure than he in guarding this pearl of the Gospel. Herein especially did he show himself to be offended, if he saw in the brethren anything either at home or abroad contrary to poverty. Verily, he himself from the beginning of the Religion till his death was rich in a tunic only, a cord, and drawers, and had naught else. His poor habit showed where he was laying up his riches. Deriving hence gladness, confidence, and freedom to run his course, he rejoiced in having exchanged perishable treasures for one a hundredfold greater.—2 *Cel.* 55.

S. FRANCIS REJECTS A RUNAWAY BOY

A BOY of Lucca, of noble birth, came to Assisi, desiring to enter the Order. He was presented to S. Francis, and on bended knees prayed with tears that he would receive him. But the man of God looked upon him, and immediately knew by the Spirit that he was not being driven by the Spirit, and said to him: 'Unhappy and carnal boy, why dost thou trust in being able to lie to the Holy Spirit and to me? Thou art weeping in a carnal manner, and thy heart is not with God. Go, for thou knowest naught of spiritual things.' Hereupon it was announced that the boy's parents were at the door, seeking to take their son and bring him home with them. So the boy went out to them, and was persuaded at last to return of his own will. But the brethren wondered, and praised the Lord in His Saint.—2 *Cel.* 40.

DENUNCIATION OF EMPTY AND WORDY PREACHERS

THAT preacher is to be pitied, as being without true piety, who, when he preaches, seeks not the salvation of souls, but his own renown, or who pulls down by the wickedness of his life what he builds up by the truth of his doctrine. To him the simple and tongueless brother is to be preferred, who by his good example provokes others to good. 'Until the barren has borne plenteous offspring,' saith the Prophetess, 'and she who had many sons is waxed feeble.' The 'barren' is the poor humble brother who is not entrusted with the duty of begetting sons in the Church. He shall bring forth many in the Judgment, because those whom he is now turning to Christ by private prayers shall then be reckoned to his glory by the Judge. 'She who has many children shall wax feeble,' because the empty and wordy preacher who now rejoices in many children gotten, as it were, by his own power, shall then know that he has nothing of his own in them.—*Opusc.* 264.

BROTHER GILES AND S. BONAVENTURA

BROTHER GILES said once to the Minister-General, brother Bonaventura: 'My father, God has bestowed many graces upon you. We ignorant and unlearned ones, who have received no [such] sufficiency, what can we do that we may be saved?' The General answered: 'If God gave a man no grace save that he might love Him, that were enough.' Then brother Giles said: 'Can an unlettered man love God as much as a learned one?' 'A poor old woman,' answered Bonaventura, 'may love God more even than a Doctor of Divinity may.' Then brother Giles arose in fervour of spirit, went into the garden, which looks toward the city [of Perugia], and cried: 'O poor old woman, simple and unlettered! love the Lord thy God, and thou mayest be greater than brother Bonaventura!' And so he fell into an ecstasy, and remained motionless for three hours.—*An. Fr.* iii. 101.

HOW S. FRANCIS CLOTHED A POOR BEGGAR

A POOR man came to the place where S. Francis was, and begged of the brethren a piece of cloth, for the love of God. S. Francis, hearing this, said to a brother: 'Look through the house to see if thou canst find any cloth, and give it to this poor man.' The brother hurried through the house, and then said that he could find none. But in order that that poor brother might not go back again empty, S. Francis went stealthily (for fear the Warden might forbid him), took a knife, sat down in a secret place, and began to cut off a piece which had been sewn on inside his own tunic, meaning to give it to the poor man secretly. But the Warden, hearing of this, went to him, and forbad him to give it, especially as the weather was then very cold, and S. Francis was sick and very chilly. So S. Francis answered: 'If thou wilt not that I should give this piece, thou must by all means see that some piece is given to this poor brother.' And so the brethren gave that poor man some cloth from their own garments, on account of S. Francis.—*S. P.* 35.

BROTHER WALTER AND HIS SOCKS

[AT Oxford the brethren in early days used no pillows], nor did they use socks unless they were sick or weak; and then only by permission. Brother Walter of Maddeley once happened to find a pair of socks, and put them on when he was going to Matins; and so he found himself more comfortable than usual at the service. But afterwards, when he went back to bed, he dreamed that he had to pass through a dangerous place between Oxford and Gloucester, where robbers were wont to be; and as he went down into the deep valley they came up on either side of the way shouting, 'Kill him! kill him!' Being sore afraid, he cried out that he was a Lesser Brother. But they said: 'Thou liest, for thou goest not barefoot!' He, thinking he was as usual barefoot, replied: 'Nay, but I am barefoot'; and then, confidently putting his foot out, he found himself wearing in their presence the said socks; whereupon, being roused from sleep by his excessive confusion, he threw the socks out into the middle of the garden.—*Eccleston, Coll.* VI.

THE CONVERSION OF BROTHER PACIFICO

THERE was in the March of Ancona a certain layman who had altogether sold himself to vanity. He was known as 'the King of Verses,' because he was the chief of those who sang of wantonness, and a composer of worldly songs. . . . He and the blessed Francis happened to meet at a certain monastery of poor nuns. Francis, with his brethren, had come thither to see his daughters in Religion; the layman, with many boon companions, to see a kinswoman of his. And the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld Francis signed as with a cross with two glittering swords, one of which went from his head to his feet, the other across his breast from one hand to the other. (He did not know Francis before, but recognised him immediately on being shown so great a miracle.) Abashed at the sight, he began to purpose better things—at least, in the distant future. But the blessed father, after first preaching to all generally, turned the sword of God's word against this man, for he took him aside and admonished him gently concerning the vanity of the world, and then pierced his heart by the threat of God's judgments. . . . Next day the holy man vested him, and named him Brother Pacifico, for that he had been restored to the peace of God.—2 *Cel.* 106.

S. FRANCIS' TEACHING WITH REGARD TO BOOKS

S. FRANCIS taught [the brethren] that the testimony of God, rather than value, and edification, rather than beauty, should be sought in books. Still, he wished that a few should be kept, and that they should be adapted to the requirements of needy brethren; and so, when a certain Minister asked that certain ambitious and very valuable books might be kept by his permission, this was what he heard in reply: 'I am not going to lose the book of the Gospel, which I have promised to obey, for the sake of thy books. Do, however, what thou desirest, but it shall not be by my permission.'—*2 Cel.* 62.

OF TRUE BROTHERLY LOVE

*BLESSED is the servant who loves his brother when his brother is sick and cannot give him satisfaction as much as when he is well and can give him satisfaction. And blessed is he who loves and fears his brother when his brother is absent from him as much as when he is with him, and would not say anything behind his back that he could not with charity say to his face.—*Opusc.* 74.

S. FRANCIS GIVES HIS CORD TO S. DOMINIC

AS the two servants of God [Francis and Dominic] were departing together [from a visit to the Bishop of Ostia at Rome], S. Dominic asked S. Francis if he would deign to give him the cord wherewith he was girded. Francis showed reluctance at this, being moved by humility to refuse the request, even as the other was moved by love to make it. However, the happy devotion of the suppliant conquered, and Dominic most devoutly girded himself beneath his tunic with the cord that had been given him. At last they clasped hands, and commended themselves each to the other most sweetly; and the one holy man said to the other: 'I would, Brother Francis, that thy Order and mine might be one, and that we might abide in the Church after the like pattern.' And when at length they parted, Dominic said to several of the bystanders: 'Verily, I say unto you that all Religious ought to follow this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness.'—*S. P.* 43; 2 *Cel.* 150.

S. FRANCIS EXPOUNDS A PASSAGE IN EZEKIEL TO A DOCTOR OF DIVINITY

WHEN S. Francis was staying at Siena, one of the Order of Preachers, a spiritual man and a Doctor of Divinity, came to see him. After conversing together for a time about God's word, the divine questioned Francis concerning Ezekiel's saying, 'If thou proclaim not to the wicked man his wickedness, I will require his soul at thy hand,' and he said: 'I myself, good father, know of many who are in mortal sin, but I do not always proclaim their wickedness to them. Will their souls, then, be required at my hand?' Francis humbly said that he was unlearned, and that it were more expedient for him to be taught by the other than to interpret the meaning of Scripture. [But when the divine still urged him to answer], Francis said: 'If the passage is of general application, I take it to mean that the servant of God ought in life and holiness so to burn within himself as to reprove all the wicked by the light of his example and discourse, and thus the brightness of his life and the perfume of his fame will proclaim to all their wickedness.' And so the divine, greatly edified, said to the companions of the blessed Francis as he went away: 'My brethren, this man's theology, based on purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle, while our learning crawls with its belly on the ground.'—2 *Cel.* 103; *S. P.* 53.

S. FRANCIS' CONSIDERATION FOR THE BRETHREN

WHEN S. Francis was staying at the hermitage of S. Eleutherius, opposite Rieti, he lined his tunic and that of his companion Ricerio with some patches, because of the great cold (for his custom was only to wear one tunic), so that his body began to receive some little comfort from this. And soon afterwards, when he was returning from prayer, he said with great joy to his companion: 'It behoves me to be the pattern and example of all the brethren, and therefore, although my body needs to have a tunic that is patched, still I must consider my other brethren, who are in need of the same thing, and perhaps neither have nor can get it. Wherefore I must consider them, to the end I may suffer the same want that they suffer, so that, when they see this in me, they may be able to endure with great patience.'—*S. P.* 16.

S. FRANCIS DENOUNCES FALSE TEACHERS

THE truth of holy humility and simplicity, of holy prayer and poverty, which is our calling, shall at the last day be exalted, glorified, and magnified ; which truth those that have been puffed up by the wind of learning have slandered by their lives and vain discourses of their own learning, saying that the very truth is falsehood, and, like blind men, persecuting those who have walked in truth. Then shall the error and falseness of their opinions by which they have walked, which they have preached as the truth, by which they have hurled many into the pit of blindness, be ended in woe, confusion, and shame, and they, with their dark opinions, shall be plunged into outer darkness with the spirits of darkness.—*Opusc.* 260.

S. FRANCIS' SINGING

THE sweet melody of the spirit within Francis was wont sometimes to break forth into utterance in French, and the vein of the divine whisper which his ear perceived in secret would burst forth into a French song of joy. Sometimes, as we have seen with our eyes, he would pick up a stick from the ground, and, putting it over his left arm, would draw across it another stick like a bow which he held in his right hand, as though playing on a viol or other instrument, and going through the proper motions, he would sing in French about the Lord. Oftentimes this ecstasy of joy would end in tears, and the song of gladness would dissolve into compassion for the Passion of Christ; and then this holy man would heave continual sighs, and utter repeated groanings, and, forgetting the things he was holding in his hands, would be uplifted towards heaven.—*2 Cel.* 127; *S. P.* 93.

STORY OF S. FRANCIS AND BROTHER LEONARD

AT the time when S. Francis was returning from beyond the sea, having brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that, being weary with the journey, he was riding for a while on an ass. His companion was walking behind, and being not a little tired, he yielded a little to mortal weakness, and began to say to himself: 'This man's parents and mine were not wont to play together as equals. But now he is riding, and I on foot am driving his ass!' While this thought was passing through his mind the holy man dismounted forthwith, saying: 'Brother, it is not meet that I should ride and thou be walking, because in the world thou wast nobler and mightier than I.' Brother Leonard was abashed; he turned red, and knew that the holy man had seen through him; he fell at his feet, and, bathed in tears, laid bare his thought, and asked for pardon.—2 *Cel.* 31.

* BLESSED is that servant who speaks not in hope of reward nor discloses all that he has, nor is swift to speak, but takes thought wisely beforehand what things he ought to speak and to answer. Woe to that Religious who keeps not in his heart the good things that the Lord shows him, and shows them not to others by his behaviour, but in hope of reward longs rather to show them to men by words ; for that man receives his reward, and his hearers gather little fruit.—*Opusc.* 72.

* BLESSED is that servant who lays up treasure in heaven of the good things which the Lord shows him, and does not long to display them to men in hope of reward ; for the Most High shall make that man's works manifest to whomsoever it shall please Him. Blessed is the servant who keeps in his own heart the secrets of the Lord.—*Opusc.* 76.

S. FRANCIS' DESIRE THAT THE BRETHREN SHOULD CULTIVATE HUMILITY

FRANCIS, the faithful servant and perfect imitator of Christ, feeling himself transformed into Christ most chiefly through the virtue of holy humility, desired this virtue to be in his brethren, and incessantly and most affectionately would encourage them by precept and example to love, desire, acquire, and maintain this grace; and especially did he admonish and persuade the Ministers and preachers to practise deeds of humility. For he used to say that they ought not by reason of their office of Superior, or of their care for preaching, to give up holy and devout prayer, going for alms, working sometimes with their hands, and doing other things like the rest of the brethren, for the sake of good example and the gain of their own and others' souls. And he would say: 'The brethren who are subject are much edified when their Ministers and preachers are occupied in prayer, and willingly stoop to deeds of humility and to the commonest acts of service. For otherwise they cannot without confusion, harm, and condemnation to themselves admonish the other brethren concerning this matter. For it is necessary, after Christ's example, to act rather than to teach, and to act and teach at the same time.'—*S. P.* 73.

S. FRANCIS DENOUNCES PUNISHMENT AGAINST THE PERUGIANS

[ONE day Francis, coming down from Greccio], said to the brethren who were present : 'The men of Perugia have done much evil to their neighbours, and their heart is lifted up, which shall be for their ignominy. But the vengeance of the Lord is nigh : and His hand is on His sword.' And a few days later he arose in fervour of spirit, and turned his course toward Perugia. . . . And when he came to Perugia he began to preach to the assembled people ; but when the knights (after their manner) rode up armed and hindered the preaching with warlike sports, he turned to them, and said with groaning . . . : 'Hear what the Lord announces to you by me, the little poor man. The Lord hath exalted you above all that are round about you ; wherefore ye ought to be kinder to your neighbours, and more thankful to God ; but, unthankful for favour, you attack, kill, and plunder your neighbours with armed hand. I tell you this shall not be left unpunished, and for your heavier punishment God shall make you turn your arms against one another. . . .' And not many days after [the city was in arms], and they fought with such fury, and there was such slaughter, that the very neighbours whom they had wronged grieved with them.—*2 Cel.* 37.

S. FRANCIS' LANGUAGE TO THOSE WHO PRAISED HIM

TO some who proclaimed him blessed and holy, Francis said: 'I may have sons and daughters yet; praise not one who is not yet secure. No one ought to be praised whose end is uncertain. If ever God should take away the treasures of His grace that He has lent me now, what else would be left to me but the body and the soul, which are common to believers and unbelievers alike?' Such was his language to those who praised him. But to himself he said: 'If the Most High had given so much to a robber he would be more thankful, Francis, than thou art.'—*Opusc.* 322; 2 *Cel.* 133.

STORY OF S. FRANCIS AND THE UNHAPPY WIFE

WHEN Francis was on his way to the Cells near Corona, a noble lady of Volusiano heard of it, and hastened to go to him. At length she came to him, wearied with the long journey (for she was very delicate and tender), and when he saw her tired and panting he pitied her, and said: 'What is thy pleasure, lady?' She answered: 'Father, that thou wouldst bless me.' And he asked: 'Art thou married or unmarried?' 'Father,' she replied, 'I have a very cruel husband who is an adversary to me in serving Jesus Christ, and my greatest grief is that I cannot perform the good will wherewith the Lord has inspired me, because my husband hinders me; wherefore I beseech thee, holy man, pray for him, that God's mercy may soften his heart. . . . And Francis said: 'Go, blessed daughter, and know that thou shalt soon have consolation of thy husband.' And he added: 'Tell him on God's behalf and on mine that now is the time of salvation, and afterwards that of justice.' The lady returned home and told her husband these words. Forthwith the Holy Ghost fell upon him . . . and caused him to make this answer with all gentleness: 'Lady, let us serve the Lord and save our souls in our own house.'—2 *Cel.* 38.

THE LIFE AT PORTIUNCULA

WHEN the lord [Cardinal] of Ostia, who afterwards became Pope Gregory [IX.], came to the Chapter of the brethren at S. Maria de Portiuncula, he went with many knights and clergy into the house to see the brethren's dormitory; and noticing that the brethren lay on the ground, with nothing under them but a little straw and some wretched mattresses almost broken to pieces, and without pillows, he began to weep aloud before all the company, saying: 'Look, this is where the brethren sleep, while we wretches use so many unnecessary things! What, then, will become of us?' And so he and all the others were greatly edified. Moreover he saw no table there, because at that place the brethren ate on the ground.—*S. P.* 21.

S. FRANCIS' TEST OF A VOCATION TO THE LIFE OF RELIGION

TWO young men came to S. Francis entreating to be received into the Order. Wishing to test their obedience and readiness to give up their own will, he brought them into the garden, and said: 'Come with me and plant cabbages for the food of the Religious, just as you see me do.' So he took the plants and put their roots above and their leaves in the earth. One of the young men, who was truly obedient, kept exactly to this way of planting, but the other, with a smattering of human knowledge, disapproved of this method as being unusual with gardeners, and maintained that cabbages should be planted the opposite way. Then S. Francis said to him: 'Son, copy me, and what I do, do thou likewise.' But he would not, thinking that what they were doing was foolish; whereupon the man of God said: 'Brother, I see that thou art a great master. Go thy way. For a simple and humble Order such masters are not meet, but rather simple and foolish persons, like this companion of thine.'—*Opusc.* 386.

* LET us all give heed, brethren, to the Good Shepherd, who bore the passion of the cross to save His sheep. The sheep of the Lord followed Him in tribulation and persecution, in shame and hunger, in weakness, in temptation, and in other trials, for which they have received of the Lord eternal life. It is, therefore, a thing for us servants of God to be much ashamed of that the Saints should do the deeds, while we desire to get glory and honour by rehearsing and preaching about them.

*THE Apostle said: 'The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.' They are killed by the letter who only want to know the words that they may be thought wiser than others, and may gain great riches and bestow them on their relations and friends. And those Religious are killed by the letter who will not follow the spirit of the divine text, but are rather eager only to know the words and interpret them to others. But those are quickened by the spirit of the divine text who do not attribute all the knowledge of the text which they know, and wish to know, to themselves, but by word and example ascribe it to the Lord Most High, to whom every good thing belongs.—*Opusc.* 62, 64.

A NOVEL REMEDY AGAINST TEMPTATION

A CERTAIN spiritual brother, who was vexed with grievous temptations, said in his heart: 'Oh, if ever I could have with me some—even if only a few—of the parings of holy Francis' nails, I believe that all this storm of temptations would disperse, and peace return, by the Lord's favour.' So, having obtained permission, he repaired to the place where Francis was, and set forth his case to one of the holy father's companions. This brother answered: 'No; I believe it is impossible for me to give thee any of his nails; for, though we cut them for him sometimes, he forbids us to keep them.' Forthwith that brother was sent for, and ordered to go to Francis, who was asking for him; and Francis said to him: 'Find me scissors, my son, for me to cut my nails at once!' The brother handed the scissors, which he had taken up for that purpose, picked up the parings, and gave them to the brother who had asked for them; and that brother, having received them devoutly, and kept them still more devoutly, was immediately delivered from every assault.—2 *Cel.* 42.

S. FRANCIS REFUSES TO MITIGATE HIS RULE

AT the suggestion of some brethren, who desired a relaxation of the rule, Ugolino, the Cardinal of Ostia, asked S. Francis to comply with the advice of certain doctors and wise men of his Order, and mitigate the precepts of the rule, or else choose one of the ancient rules of Augustine, Benedict, or Basil for himself and his brethren to observe. The zealot for the Gospel state of life said not a word in reply, but when he had called the brethren together in Chapter, he said with great fervour of spirit in the presence of that Cardinal: 'My brethren, my brethren, the Lord has called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and in power has shown this way to me for myself and for those who would cleave to and imitate me. Therefore, I will not have you talk to me of observing the rule of Benedict, Basil, or any other than that which God's mercy has given and shown to me. The Lord Himself told me He would have me to be His fool in this world, and would not lead me and mine by any other way to the heavenly country than by this, which, though it appear folly to men, is deemed great wisdom in the sight of God. I fear lest your wisdom and learning be turned for you hereafter into ignorance and confusion.' These words struck such fear into the Cardinal and the brethren that they fell at his feet, and humbly begged him to pardon their request.—*Opusc.* 346.

STORY OF S. FRANCIS AND THE LEVERET

ONCE, when S. Francis was staying at Greccio, one of the brethren brought him a live leveret that had been taken in a snare, and when the blessed man saw it he was moved with compassion, and said: 'Brother leveret, come to me. Why didst thou let thyself be so deceived?' And forthwith the leveret, on being released by the brother who was holding him, fled to the holy man, and, without being driven thither by anyone, lay down in his bosom, as being the safest place. When he had rested there a little while, the holy father, caressing him with maternal affection, let him go, so that he might freely return to the woodland. At last, after the leveret had been put down on the ground many times, and had each time returned to the holy man, he bade the brethren carry him into a wood which was hard by.—1 *Cel.* 60.

S. FRANCIS' DEVOTION TO THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S BODY

TOWARDS the Sacrament of the Lord's Body S. Francis glowed with the fervour of all his being, marvelling at the thought of that loving condescension, of that most condescending love. He deemed it to be treating the Sacrament with no small contempt if, having leisure, he did not hear at least one Mass daily. He often communicated, and that so devoutly as to make others devout. . . . He loved France as the friend of the Lord's Body, and longed to die there, by reason of her reverence for hallowed things. . . . It was his will that great reverence should be shown to the priestly hands which, in the offering of that Sacrifice, have been invested with an authority so divine; and he often used to say: 'If I chanced to meet at the same time any Saint coming from heaven and any poor priest, I would do honour to the presbyter first, and would sooner go to kiss his hands, and I would say to the other, "Oh, wait for me, S. Lawrence, for the hands of this man handle the Word of Life, and possess that which is more than human."'—2 *Cel.* 201.

THE SWALLOWS OBEY S. FRANCIS

ONE day when Francis was come to Alviano to set forth the word of God, he went up on an eminence where all could see him, and asked for silence. But though all the company held their peace and stood reverently by, a great number of swallows who were building their nests in that same place were chirping and chattering loudly. And, as Francis could not be heard for their chirping, he spoke to the birds and said: 'My sisters, the swallows, it is now time for me to speak, too, because you have been saying enough all this time. Listen to the word of God and be in silence, and quiet, until the sermon is finished!' And those little birds (to the amazement of the bystanders) kept silence forthwith, and did not move from that place till the preaching was ended. So those men, when they had seen that sign, were filled with great admiration, and said: 'Truly this man is a Saint, and a friend of the Most High.'—1 *Cel.* 59.

S. FRANCIS' LOVE OF FLOWERS

FRANCIS used to bid the brother who tilled the garden not to cultivate all the ground merely to raise plants for food, but to leave some part of the ground to bring forth verdant plants that might yield in their seasons our brothers the flowers, for love of Him who is called 'the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys.' Indeed, he would say that brother gardener must always make a beautiful little plot out of some part of the garden, placing and planting therein some of all sweet-smelling plants, and of all such as bring forth beautiful flowers, that in their season they might invite the men who should behold those plants and flowers to praise. For every creature cries, saying: 'O man, God made me on account of thee!' And they who were with him used to see him so rejoicing inwardly and outwardly, as it were, in all creatures, that as he touched or looked at them his spirit seemed to be not on earth, but in heaven.—*S. P.* 118.

THE VIRTUE OF BEGGING ALMS FROM DOOR TO DOOR

THE holy father made use of alms gathered from door to door much more willingly than of such as had been offered. He declared that to be ashamed of begging was hostile to salvation, but that that shame in begging which does not draw back the foot was holy. He praised the blush rising in a modest forehead, but not the being confounded by fear. Sometimes in exhorting his disciples to seek alms he used these words: 'Go, for at this latest hour the Lesser Brethren have been lent to the world in order that the elect may fulfil in them that which shall bring them this commendation from the Judge: "That which ye have done to one of My Lesser Brethren ye have done to Me."' And, accordingly, he said that the Order had been privileged by the great Prophet who had so clearly expressed the title of its name.—2 *Cel.* 71.

STORY OF S. FRANCIS AND THE CICALA

NEAR the cell of the Saint of God at Portiuncula a cicala used to perch on a fig-tree, singing sweetly. Sometimes the blessed father would hold out his hand to her, and call her kindly to him, saying, 'My sister cicala, come to me,' and she immediately came up on his hand, as though endowed with reason. Then he said: 'Sing, my sister cicala, and praise the Lord thy Creator with a joyful song.' And without delay she began obediently to sing, and ceased not until the man of God mingled his own praise with her songs, and bade her fly back to her accustomed place, where she remained for eight days in succession, as if bound. When the Saint came down from his cell he always touched her with his hands, and bade her sing, and she was always eager to do his bidding. Then he said to his companions: 'Let us give our sister cicala leave to depart, for she has gladdened us enough with her praise; that our flesh may not have occasion for vainglory by such things.' And forthwith the cicala dismissed by him went away, and never appeared there again.—2 *Cel.* 171.

OF SELF-SACRIFICING OBEDIENCE

*THE Lord said in the Gospel: 'He who renounces not everything which he possesses cannot be My disciple'; and 'He who will save his soul shall lose it.' That man renounces everything which he possesses and loses his body who gives himself up wholly to the hands of his Superior, in obedience; and whatever he says or does that he knows not to be contrary to his Superior's will (provided that what he does be good) is true obedience. And when the inferior has in view things better and more profitable for his soul than those that his Superior ordains, let him sacrifice his own will to God, and study to fulfil what his Superior ordains. For this is obedience founded on charity, since the man sacrifices himself to God and his neighbour. But if the Superior should give an order to the inferior which goes against his conscience, let the inferior not forsake him, though he obey him not. And if he is persecuted by others on that account, let him love them all the more for God's sake. For he who would rather bear persecution than be separated from his brethren truly remains in perfect obedience, for he lays down his soul for his brethren. For there are many Religious who, under the excuse of having better things in view than those their Superiors enjoin, look behind them and return to the vomit of self-will. These are murderers who ruin many souls by their evil examples.—*Opusc.* 58.

S. FRANCIS AND THE WATERFOWL

WHEN S. Francis was crossing the lake of Rieti in a little boat on his way to the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman presented him with a waterfowl, that he might rejoice over it in the Lord. The blessed father received the bird with joy, and then, opening his hands, gently invited it freely to fly away. The bird would not depart, but rested in his hands as in a nest, and the holy man remained with his eyes lifted up in prayer. Then, after a long delay, as though coming back to himself from elsewhere, he sweetly told the bird to return without fear to its former liberty. And so, on receiving this permission, with the holy man's blessing, the bird showed its joy by some motion of its body, and flew away.—2 *Cel.* 167.

S. FRANCIS' INJUNCTIONS TO OFFICE-BEARERS IN THE ORDER

IN your government, my brethren, the [provincial] Ministers, I beg two things of you: First, that you be not respecters of persons; second, that you do not enjoin a light thing in virtue of holy obedience, for this is to draw the sword at once, which ought not to be done save on mature consideration and on emergency. Be moderate in commands, merciful to sinners, ready to forgive, sparing in food, poor in apparel, gentle in word, faithful to God and your duties. Found words and precepts on your own deeds, if you would have those under you to found their deeds on your words, and to fulfil in action what you enjoin.—*Opusc.* 30.

SUPERIORS should rarely order things to be done 'on obedience,' nor should that javelin be hurled first which ought to be last. The hand should not at once be put to the sword. But he who fears not the sword, or that inferior who hastens not to obey a demand on his obedience, neither fears God nor respects men, if he has no cause at all for hesitating to obey. Therefore, the Superior must not be rash in giving orders; for what is authority to command in a rash Superior but a sword in the hand of a madman? —*Opusc.* 466.

A TIMELY OFFERING

WHEN Francis. the father of the poor, was at the palace of the Bishop of Rieti, he was wearing a worn-out tunic, and one day he said to one of his companions whom he had appointed his Warden: 'I would, brother, that, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me some cloth for a tunic.' The brother, on hearing this, cast about in his mind how he might come by the cloth which had been asked for in such necessity and with such humility; and next morning at dawn he went to the door intending to go to the village for the cloth, and by the door he found a man sitting who wanted to speak to him, and he said to that brother: 'Do, for the love of God, accept from me cloth for six tunics. Keep one for thyself, and distribute the rest as it pleases thee, for the benefit of my soul!' The brother, filled with joy, returned to Francis, and told him of the offering made from heaven; and Francis said: 'Accept the tunics, for the man has been sent hither that he might in such wise supply my need,' adding: 'Thanks be to Him who alone, it seems, takes thought for us!'—2 *Cel.* 43.

BROTHER GILES' ZEAL FOR POVERTY

TWO of the brethren had been driven out of the kingdom of Sicily by the Emperor Frederick, who was under the ban of the Church. They came to brother Giles, who kindly welcomed them, and inquired whence they were and whence they came. They replied that they had been driven out of their own land by Frederick, the persecutor of the Church. At these words brother Giles, inflamed by zeal for Poverty, began to cry out and to rebuke them, saying: 'You have been driven out of your own land? chased out of your own land? Surely ye are not Lesser Brethren!' Then, after still crying aloud and repeating the words, he added, smiting the palms of his hands together: 'Dear brethren, you are sinning against Frederick, that greatest of sinners. For, whereas he has given you many good things, you ought to pity him and pray for him, that the Lord would soften his heart; and not to murmur against him, for he has not cast you out of your own land if ye are truly Lesser Brethren, for ye can have no land of your own.' —*An. Fr.* iii. 110.

S. FRANCIS MAKES NESTS FOR THE TURTLE-DOVES

A YOUTH had taken some turtle-doves, and was carrying them off to sell. He met S. Francis, who looked on the doves with a pitying eye, and said: 'Kind youth, I pray thee give me these turtle-doves, that such gentle and innocent birds (who are likened in Holy Scripture to chaste, humble, and faithful souls) may not come into the hands of cruel men, who would kill them.' The youth (inspired by God) forthwith gave them all to S. Francis, who took them into his lap, and began sweetly to speak to them, saying: 'Oh, my sisters, simple turtle-doves, innocent and chaste, why do ye let yourselves be caught? But now I am going to save you from death, and will make you nests, that ye may increase and multiply according to the command of God your Creator.' So he went and made nests for them all, and they settled there and began to lay eggs and bring forth young in the presence of the brethren, and they were as tame and familiar with S. Francis and the others as if they had been hens that had always been fed by them. Nor did they depart until S. Francis with his blessing gave them leave.—*Fioretti* 62.

BISHOP GROSSETESTE ON BEGGING AND WORKING

BROTHER WILLIAM of Nottingham once said that, while the Lord Bishop of Lincoln of holy memory (Grosseteste) held the office of Lector (teacher) to the Lesser Brethren at Oxford, he preached in the Chapter of the brethren on Poverty, and laid down that in the ladder of Poverty mendicity was the step nearest to the embracing of heavenly things. Afterwards, however, he took brother William apart, and told him that there was one step higher—namely, to live by one's own work; and accordingly he added that the Beguines belonged to the most perfect and holy Order, because they lived by their own toil, and did not burden the world by their demands.—*Eccleston, Coll.* xiv.

BROTHER GILES' ZEAL FOR WORK

BROTHER GILES went by S. Francis' leave to visit the Holy Sepulchre, and came to the port of Brindisi, where he remained some days, because there was no ship ready. So, desiring to live by his toil, he got a water-pot, filled it with water, and went through the town crying, 'Who wants water?' And by his toil he received bread and what was necessary for the bodily life of himself and his companion; and then he passed the sea, and visited the Holy Sepulchre and the other holy places very devoutly. On his way back he halted at the city of Ancona for some days, where, since he was wont to live by his labour, he made himself baskets of reeds, which he sold, not for money, but for bread for himself and his companion. He used also to carry the dead to burial for that same hire. When this means failed he came back to the table of Jesus Christ, asking alms from door to door. And so with great toil and poverty he returned to S. Maria degli Angeli.—*Fioretti* 226.

BROTHER GILES' LIFE AT ROME

WHEN brother Giles was once at a convent in Rome he determined to live by his bodily toil, and this was his way of life: Early in the morning he heard a Mass very devoutly; then he went off to a wood eight miles from Rome, and brought thence a bundle of wood on his back, which he sold for bread and other things to eat. Once, as he was returning with a load of wood, a woman asked to buy, and having agreed about the price, he carried the wood home for her. The woman, on seeing that he was a Religious, gave him, notwithstanding the agreement, a great deal more than she had promised. Said brother Giles: 'Good woman, I will not be overcome of the vice of avarice; therefore I will not take a greater price than that agreed on.' And so not only would he take no more, but he took the half of what had been agreed; wherefore that woman conceived a great devotion for him.—*Fioretti* 227, 228.

S. FRANCIS DRIVES DEVILS OUT OF AREZZO

S. FRANCIS happened once to come to Arezzo at a time when that city was so shaken with intestinal war that its destruction seemed imminent. The man of God therefore lodged outside the city in a suburb, and beheld the devils exulting over it and inflaming the citizens to their mutual destruction. So he called brother Sylvester, a godly man of worthy simplicity, and commanded him thus: 'Go before the gate of the city, and on behalf of Almighty God command the devils to go out of it as speedily as possible.' The simple and dutiful brother hastened to obey, and, bespeaking the favour of the Lord by praise, he cried aloud before the gate: 'On behalf of God, and by order of our father Francis, depart far hence, all ye devils!' Soon afterwards peace was restored to the city, and Francis opened his preaching to the citizens with these words: 'I speak to you as to men formerly in subjection to the devil, and in the bonds of demons, whom now I know to have been set free by a poor man's prayers.'—2 *Cel.* 108.

PARTICULARS AS TO S. FRANCIS' PREACHING

WHEN, as very often happened, he was preaching God's word among many thousands of people, Francis was as confident as if he had been speaking with an intimate companion. He saw the greatest concourse of people as one man ; and to one man he preached most carefully, as if to a multitude. His purity of mind furnished him with confidence in preaching ; and without premeditation he would utter things wonderful and unheard before by all. Sometimes, however, it happened if he had meditated his sermon beforehand that when the people were come together he had forgotten what he had thought of, and could not say anything else. Then, without any embarrassment, he confessed to the people that he had thought of many things beforehand of which he could remember nothing at all ; and suddenly he would be filled with such eloquence that he moved his hearers to admiration. At other times, however, when he could say nothing, he dismissed the people with his blessing, having by that alone preached to them most effectually.—1 *Cel.* 72.

AS he himself afterwards testified, Francis had learnt by revelation from the Lord this greeting—namely, 'The Lord give thee peace.' And therefore in all his preaching he greeted the people at the beginning of his sermon, proclaiming peace. And, strange to tell, before his conversion he had had a certain forerunner who often used to go through Assisi greeting after this manner, 'Peace and good; peace and good,' concerning whom it is firmly to be believed that even as John announcing Christ to come, gave way when Christ began to preach, so also this man, like a second John, who had preceded the blessed Francis in announcing peace, appeared no more as he had done previously, after the coming of Francis. Forthwith, therefore, the man of God, Francis, filled with the spirit of the prophets, began to announce peace immediately after his said herald, and to preach salvation; and by his wholesome warnings very many entered into the covenant of true peace who had been discordant from Christ and far from salvation.—3 *Soc.* 26.

ADMONITION ON THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

*HE who has the Spirit of the Lord that dwells in His faithful ones is he who receives the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord; all others, who presume to receive It, not having of the same Spirit, eat and drink judgment to themselves. Wherefore it is said: 'Ye sons of men, how long will ye be gross of heart? Why is it that ye love vanity and seek falsehood?' Why do ye not know the truth and believe in the Son of God? Behold, every day He humbles Himself; even as when from His royal seat He came to the Virgin's womb, so He comes to us daily in lowly guise; daily does He come down from the bosom of the Father on high to the altar, in the priest's hands; and as He appeared to the holy Apostles in very flesh, so now He shows Himself to us in the hallowed bread; and as they, when looking with the eye of their flesh, only saw His flesh, but when contemplating with the eyes of the Spirit believed that He was the Lord God, so let us also, beholding the bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and believe firmly that it is His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in such sort is the Lord ever with His faithful ones, as He said Himself: 'Behold I am with you until the end of the world.'—*Opusc.* 56.

S. FRANCIS' MANNER OF PRAYER

S. FRANCIS often used to choose out solitary places in order that he might therein wholly direct his mind to God; but yet, when he saw that the time was favourable, he was not slothful in attending to business and in applying himself gladly to the salvation of his neighbours. For his safest haven was prayer: not prayer for one moment, not vacant or presumptuous prayer, but long-continued, full of devotion, calm, and humble; if he began late he scarce ended with morning. Whether he were walking, sitting, or eating and drinking, he was intent on prayer. He would often go alone by night to pray in churches which were deserted, or in lonely places, wherein, under the protection of God's grace, he got the better of many fears and distresses of mind. In such places he fought hand to hand with the Devil, who not only smote him inwardly by temptations, but terrified him outwardly through the falling in and overthrow [of buildings].—1 *Cel.* 71, 72.

HOW S. FRANCIS BY PRAYER BROUGHT WATER OUT OF THE ROCK

ONCE, when S. Francis would go to a certain hermitage in order there to give himself more freely to contemplation, he borrowed from a poor man an ass to ride on, for he was very weak. It was in summer, and as the countryman followed the man of God up the mountain he became weary by reason of the length and steepness of the way, and before they reached the place he became faint from thirst. He cried urgently after Francis, and begged him to take pity on him, saying that he should die unless he could be refreshed by some drink. Without delay the holy man (who always pitied the distressed) dismounted, and fell on his knees, stretching up the palms of his hands to heaven, nor did he cease to pray until he felt that he had been heard. 'Make haste,' said he to the countryman, 'and yonder thou wilt find water which Christ has brought to thee at this hour out of the rock to drink.' The countryman drank a draught out of the hard rock by the power of him who had prayed. Water had never flowed there before, nor could any be found afterwards, though diligent search was made.—2 *Cel.* 46.

S. FRANCIS' STRICTNESS IN GOING FOR ALMS

THAT he might not even once offend his holy spouse, Francis, the servant of the Most High, used to act thus: If ever, when invited to eat by great lords, he was to be honoured by a lavish table, he would first seek for scraps of bread among the neighbouring houses, and then, enriched thus by want, he hastened to sit down to meat. Sometimes, when he was asked why he did this, he answered that he would not relinquish an enduring inheritance for a fief granted for an hour. 'It is poverty,' said he, 'that appoints the heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, and not your false riches.'—*2 Cel. 72.*

S. FRANCIS' NEARNESS TO GOD

FRANCIS, the man of God, though absent in body from the Lord, strove to make his spirit present in heaven, and having already become a fellow-citizen of the angels, was separated from them by the wall of the flesh only. His whole soul thirsted for his Christ, to whom he devoted not only his whole heart, but his whole body. . . . The world had no savour for him, who was fed with heavenly sweetness, and divine delights made him revolt from the gross pleasures of men. He always sought out a hidden place wherein he might make not only his spirit but his very members fit for his God. When in public he was suddenly visited by the Lord, in order that he might not lack a cell, he made a cell of his cloak. And if he had no cloak, he covered his face with his sleeve, that he might not disclose the hidden manna.—2 *Cel.* 94.

S. FRANCIS IN PRAYER

WHEN praying in solitary places, S. Francis would fill the woods with groanings, water the ground with tears, smite his breast with his hands, and having there discovered, as it were, a secret hiding-place, he would often speak with his Lord in words, would make answer to his Judge, entreat his Father; there he would converse with his Friend, and rejoice with the Bridegroom. And in order that he might make of the whole marrow of his being a whole burnt-offering in manifold ways, he would set before his eyes in manifold ways Him who is supremely simple. . . . And so the whole man, not so much praying, as having become a living prayer, concentrated his whole attention and affection on the one thing which he was seeking from the Lord. With what sweetness, think you, was he encompassed as he became accustomed to such intercourse? No one knows but he himself . . . such knowledge is not given to those who have had no experience.—2 *Cel.* 95.

S. FRANCIS' RESPONSE TO VISITATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

THE blessed father Francis was wont never to pass over negligently any visitation of the Spirit; but when it was offered he followed it up, and, so long as the Lord permitted, he enjoyed the sweetness thus offered. If, therefore, while he was being pressed by any business, or was engaged on a journey, he gradually became aware of the touch of grace, he would taste that manna of utmost sweetness by frequent snatches here and there. For as he was on his way he would allow his companions to go on ahead, and himself stand still, and so, converting into enjoyment the inspiration that had newly come to him, he received not the grace in vain.—2 *Cel.* 95.

S. FRANCIS AS THOUGHT-READER

IT was S. Francis' custom [at Greccio] to pass the whole day in his cell alone, and not to come back to the brethren until compelled by the need of taking food. . . . Now it happened once that two brethren of worthy conversation came to the hermitage from a long distance, the whole cause of their coming being their desire to see the holy man and to receive his long-coveted blessing. So when they arrived, and did not find him (for he had already retired from public view into his cell), they were wondrously afflicted, and, since the uncertainty concerning his return would impose on them a long delay, they withdrew in great sorrow, attributing their disappointment to their unworthiness, and followed by S. Francis' companions, who tried to comfort them in their desolation. But when they were gone about a stone's cast from the place suddenly the holy man cried after them, and said to one of his companions: 'Tell my brethren who are come hither to look back at me.' And when the said brethren had turned their faces toward him he made the sign of the cross over them, and affectionately blessed them. And they went back on their way praising and blessing the Lord.—*2 Cel.* 45.

S. FRANCIS' CARE TO GUARD AGAINST WANDERING THOUGHTS

S. FRANCIS deemed himself grievously to offend if at any time he were moved by vain fancies when at prayer. If any such thing happened he never failed to atone for it by immediate confession, and his zeal herein had become so much a matter of use that he was very seldom troubled by flies of this sort. One Lent he had spent his odds and ends of time (that they might not be altogether lost) in making a certain vessel. One day while he was devoutly saying Tierce his eyes chanced to turn to look at the vessel, and he felt that the fervour of his inner man was checked. Grieving, therefore, that the cry from his heart to the Divine ears had been interrupted, when Tierce was finished he said in the hearing of the brethren: 'Alas for the fruitless work which has had the power to turn away my mind to it! I will sacrifice it to the Lord, whose sacrifice it has hindered.' And with these words he seized the vessel and threw it into the fire.—*2 Cel.* 97.

AN INSTANCE OF S. FRANCIS' ABSORPTION IN HEAVENLY THINGS

MANY times the blessed Francis was caught up out of himself in such rapture of contemplation that he could disclose to none that which he experienced transcending human sense. . . . He was once riding on an ass at a time when it was necessary for him to pass through Borgo S. Sepolcro, and as he intended to rest at a certain leper's house, it became known to many that the man of God was to pass through. Men and women flocked from all sides to see him, desiring, with their accustomed devotion, to touch him. They came and felt him, pulled him along, and cut off little pieces from his tunic to put away. Francis seemed insensible to it all, and heeded what was going on as little as a corpse. At length he and his company reached their destination, and having long since left Borgo S. Sepolcro, the contemplator of heavenly things (as though coming back from elsewhere) anxiously inquired when they would be getting near Borgo. —2 *Cel.* 98.

OF HUMILITY IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

S. FRANCIS often spoke thus to his familiar friends: 'When a servant of God is visited at prayer by some fresh consolation from the Lord, he ought, before coming forth from prayer, to raise his eyes to heaven, and, clasping his hands, to say to God: "O Lord, thou hast sent this consolation and sweetness from heaven to me, an unworthy sinner, and I restore it to Thee that Thou mayest keep it for me, for that I am a robber of Thy treasure." And again: "Lord, take from me Thy good in this world, that Thou mayest keep it for me hereafter." Such should be his language; and when he comes forth from prayer he ought to bear himself toward others as much after the manner of a poor sinner as if he had gained no fresh grace. . . .' It was S. Francis' custom to rise for prayer so stealthily and gently that none of his companions noticed either that he was rising or that he was praying. But when late at night he went to bed he made a noise and almost a din, so that all might know that he was going to rest.—2 *Cel.* 99.

THE BITER BIT

ONCE, when S. Francis came to Alexandria, in Lombardy, to preach the word of God, he was entertained by a God-fearing man of good report. His host begged him to observe the holy Gospel by eating that which was set before him. He agreed, being conquered by the devotion of his host, who hastened to prepare a capon seven years old (*sic*) for the man of God to eat. As they sat at table a son of Belial appeared at the door feigning poverty, and begging for help for God's sake. The holy man acknowledged that Name blessed above all things and sweeter to him than honey, and most thankfully took up a piece of the bird, put it on some bread, and sent it to the beggar. . . . Next morning S. Francis preached to the assembled people. That wicked man began to bluster, and tried to show the piece of capon (which he had kept) to everyone. 'See,' he cried, 'what manner of man is this Francis whom you honour as a Saint? Look at all the meat he gave me while he was eating last night.' All the people cried out against him, and said he was filled with the Devil; but what he tried to persuade them was a piece of capon appeared to all to be a fish; and the wretched man, abashed by the miracle, was forced to admit what everyone else asserted. He begged the Saint's pardon before them all, and the meat returned to its own species after the transgressor had returned to his right mind.—*2 Cel.* 78, 79.

S. FRANCIS RESCUES A SHEEP

AS Francis was journeying with brother Paul to Osimo, he found in the fields a shepherd feeding a herd of goats. Among the multitude of goats there was one little sheep going along in humble fashion and quietly grazing. When Francis saw her he stopped, and, moved in his heart with grief, said to his companion, groaning aloud : ' Seest thou not this sheep which is walking so meekly among these she-goats and he-goats ? I tell thee that even so our Lord Jesus Christ walked meek and lowly among the Pharisees and chief priests. Wherefore I ask thee, my son, for love of Him, to take pity with me on this little sheep, and let us pay the price and get her out from among these goats.' And brother Paul, wondering at his grief, began to grieve with him. But they had nothing but the poor tunics they wore, and as they were anxiously considering how the price might be paid, a merchant who was on a journey came up, and offered the price they desired. They took the sheep, giving thanks to God, and came to Osimo, where the Bishop received them with great reverence.—1 *Cel.* 77.

[WHEN Francis and his companion had been received by the Bishop of Osimo], the Bishop wondered both at the sheep which the man of God was leading and at the affection wherewith he was moved toward her. But after Christ's servant had unfolded to him at some length the parable of the sheep, the Bishop, pricked at the heart, gave thanks to God for the purity of the man of God. Next day, on leaving the city, Francis considered what he should do with the sheep, and on the advice of his companion he handed it over to a monastery of the handmaids of Christ at S. Severino to be taken care of. The venerable handmaids of Christ received the sheep with joy as a great gift bestowed on them by God, and they kept it carefully for a long time, and wove of the wool a tunic, which they sent to Francis at S. Maria de Portiuncula on the occasion of a Chapter of the Order. The holy man of God received it with great gladness, and kissed it again and again, inviting all the bystanders to share his joy.—1 *Cel.* 78.

THE APPARITION OF THE THREE POOR WOMEN

WHEN Francis, Christ's poor man, was hastening from Rieti to Siena for the cure of his eyes, he passed over a plain near Rocca di Campiglio, accompanied by a certain physician who was attached to the Order. And lo! three poor women appeared by the wayside as S. Francis was passing. They were so much alike in stature, age, and countenance that you might suppose that threefold matter had been perfected by one form. And as S. Francis came up they reverently bowed their heads and extolled him by a new greeting, saying: 'Welcome, Lady Poverty!' Forthwith the Saint was filled with joy unspeakable, for there was nothing in him that he would so gladly have men salute as that which those women had fixed on. And first, thinking that they really were poor women, he turned to the doctor who accompanied him, and said: 'I pray thee, for God's sake, give, so that I may give something to these poor women.' The doctor quickly took out money, and leaping from his horse, gave some coins to each one. So they went on a little further on their way, and then the brethren and the doctor looked round, and saw that all the plain was void of women. Greatly amazed, they reckoned the occurrence among the wonders of God, knowing that those were not women who had flown away more swiftly than birds.—2 *Cel.* 93.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF A LESSER BROTHER

S. FRANCIS once said to his companion: 'I should not seem to myself a Lesser Brother unless I were in the state which I will describe to thee. Suppose, being set over the brethren, I go to the Chapter, and they, being assembled, ask me to announce to them the word of God, and I get up and preach as the Holy Spirit may have taught me, and at the end they say to me: "We will not have thee to reign over us, for thou art unlettered, uneloquent, homely, and simple," and finally I am expelled with obloquy, and despised by them all. I tell thee that I should not seem to myself a Lesser Brother unless I rejoiced when they reviled me and ignominiously cast me out, just as much as when they paid me respect and honour, their own profit and advantage being equal in either case. For if I rejoice over their profit and devotion when they exalt and honour me, wherein, however, there may be danger to my own soul, much more ought I to be glad and rejoice over the profit and health of my own soul when they blame me, for herein the soul's gain is certain.'—*S. P.* 64; *Bonaventura* vi. 5; *2 Cel.* 145.

S. FRANCIS' LIBERALITY

ONCE, when S. Francis was going through a certain province preaching, two French brethren met him; and they, having received great comfort from him, finally asked him for his tunic, for the love of God. As soon as he heard the words 'the love of God,' he instantly put off his tunic and gave it to them, himself remaining naked for some while. (For whenever the love of God was mentioned to him, he never refused to give to anyone his cord, or his tunic, or anything else that was asked for; indeed, it used to displease him greatly, and he would often rebuke the brethren when he heard them on any account name the love of God unprofitably. For he used to say: 'The love of God is a thing so high and precious that it ought not to be named except rarely, and in great necessity, and with great reverence.') But one of those brethren took off his tunic and gave it in like manner to him.

Whenever he gave his tunic or a part of it to anyone, he suffered great want and discomfort, because he could not at once get another tunic, particularly as he always wished to have a poor tunic made up of patches, sometimes both inside and out; indeed, he never, or very seldom, would wear a tunic of new cloth, but would get from a brother a tunic the latter had been wearing for some time.—*S. P.* 34.

S. FRANCIS STRIPS THE VIRGIN'S ALTAR TO PROVIDE FOR THE BRETHREN

ONCE, when brother Peter dei Cattani (S. Francis' vicar) saw that S. Maria de Portiuncula was crowded by brethren from distant parts, and that the alms were not enough to provide them with necessaries, he said to S. Francis: 'I know not, brother, what I am to do, for I have not wherewith to provide sufficiently for the crowd of brethren coming together from every quarter. I pray thee to allow somewhat of the property of novices entering the Order to be reserved, so that recourse may be had to it in time of need.' The holy man answered: 'Away with such piety as that of acting impiously against the Rule for the sake of anyone whomsoever!' 'What am I to do, then?' said the other. 'Strip the Virgin's altar,' replied Francis, 'and take away its various ornaments, since thou canst not help the needy in any other way. Believe me, she will be better pleased to have her Son's Gospel observed and her altar stript, than to have the altar vested and her Son despised. The Lord will send someone to restore to His Mother the ornaments which He has lent us.'—2 *Cel.* 67.

S. FRANCIS' UNION WITH JESUS

S. FRANCIS was ever on the Cross, shrinking from no toil and pain if only he might accomplish God's will in himself and concerning himself. The brethren, moreover, who lived with him knew how continually every day his talk was of Jesus; how sweet and tender, how benign and full of love, his conversation ever was. Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth spoke, and the spring of enlightened love which filled him inwardly through and through bubbled forth outwardly. Verily, he was much with Jesus; ever did he bear Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in his other members. Oh, how often, when sitting at table, if he heard or named or thought of Jesus, did he forget the bodily food, even as we read concerning the Saint: 'Seeing, he saw not; and hearing, heard not.' Nay more, many a time, as he was walking on, meditating and singing of Jesus, did he forget whither he was going, and invite all the elements to praise Jesus.—1 *Cel.* 115.

S. FRANCIS PREACHES BEFORE THE BISHOP OF TERNI

IN the city of Terni S. Francis preached to the people in the presence of the Bishop a sermon which seemed to the prelate of such eloquence, such learning, and such insight into the mysteries [of God] that after the humble preacher had come down from the pulpit the Bishop rose and said to the people: 'Give no scanty praise to the Lord, who by the mouth of a despised poor man has taught you so many good things, has revealed His mysteries, and has set before you the reward of virtue, and declared the punishments appointed for sins. Take heed to yourselves that ye sin not: the Lord Himself has shown you to-day by this poor man what you ought to do and to avoid.' Then the blessed father fell at the Bishop's feet, and said: 'I tell you in truth, my Lord Bishop, that no one has ever paid me such honour as thou hast done to-day: some proclaim me holy, some proclaim me blessed in doing the works of God, ascribing honour and glory to me, not to God; but thou, in thy wisdom, hast done me true honour to-day in ascribing to God praise and honour, for they are His. Thou hast separated the precious from the worthless in appropriating to God wisdom and virtue, but to me ignorance and worthlessness.'—*Opusc.* 344.

S. FRANCIS ON PREACHING

I WOULD have the ministers of the word of God not to be hindered by any other duties from applying themselves to spiritual efforts, for they have been chosen by that great King to announce to the peoples the decrees which proceed out of His mouth. The preacher, therefore, ought first to draw in by secret prayer what he is afterwards to show forth by his sacred discourses; he must grow hot within before he utters his words outwardly. Assuredly this office is to be reverenced, and those who minister in it are to be reverenced by all. These are the life of the body, the assailers of devils, the lantern of the world. Those preachers are to be praised who at the right season are wise for themselves, and taste for themselves; but those divide [their time] badly who spend all of it on preaching and none on devotion. Others, again, are to be pitied who often barter what they do for the oil of empty praise. The office of preaching is more acceptable to the Father of mercies than any sacrifice, especially if it be discharged with zeal for charity, so that the preacher may toil in it more by his example than by his words, more by tearful prayer than by wordy discourse. —*Opusc.* 262.

SOME SAYINGS OF BROTHER GILES

NOT only did brother Giles shun idleness in himself, but he sternly rebuked it in others. And so when he saw that many liked to preach things that they avoided in practice he would say: 'If thou doest the good thou understandest, thou shalt enter into the good thou understandest not. Deeds are farther from words than heaven from earth. If one let thee go into his vineyard to gather the grapes, would he forbid thee the leaves? It is ten thousand times better for a man to teach himself than to teach the whole world. If thou wouldst know much, work much and bow thy head much. A noble preacher is Lady Humility. . . .' And he would say with a sigh: 'A bleating sheep is very different from a browsing one'—*i.e.*, a preacher from a worker. A brother once wanted to preach in the piazza of Perugia. Brother Giles advised him to say in his sermon, 'Boo, boo; much I talk, but little I do.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 85.

ANGELS IN THE KITCHEN

S. FRANCIS received into the Order a certain knight named Benvenuto, who, out of humility, desired always to serve the brethren in the kitchen. One Saturday a certain burgher in the province of Sicily, desiring to offer some refreshment to the brethren, sent to their dwelling in good time all that was necessary. Brother Benvenuto, before preparing the food, first heard the Mass of the day with great devotion. When this was over, and the brethren were solemnly beginning the Mass of Our Lady, he, for the sweetness of it, fell into an ecstasy, and so remained till the end, entirely forgetful of his duties in the kitchen. When he came to himself again, fearing to be put to confusion, he hastened to the kitchen, and as he drew near he heard the sound of many who were busy there. Wondering at this (for the kitchen was shut), he opened the door and found no one within, but everything prepared as he wished. And he held of a surety that, by reason of the said Mass, the food had been prepared by the ministry of angels.—*An. Fr.* iii. 189.

S. FRANCIS AND THE PHEASANT

ONCE, when S. Francis was ill, a Sienese nobleman sent him a pheasant. S. Francis received it joyfully, not because he desired to eat it, but in the manner in which he was always wont to rejoice in such creatures for love of the Creator; and he said to the pheasant: 'Praised be our Creator, brother pheasant!' and, turning to the brethren, 'Let us try now whether brother pheasant will stay with us or go to his usual haunts.' So one of the brethren carried the pheasant far off to the vineyard, but the bird hastened back to the father's cell. Again S. Francis ordered it to be taken farther away, but it again returned as fast as possible to the cell door, and came in, almost forcing its way under the tunics of the brethren who were at the door. So S. Francis ordered the pheasant to be carefully fed, embracing it and caressing it with sweet words. [A physician devoted to S. Francis offered to feed the pheasant, and took it home with him; but the pheasant refused to eat. The physician brought it back], and as soon as it was put down on the ground and saw its father Francis, it began to feed joyfully.—*2 Cel.* 170.

S. FRANCIS AND THE TENCH

THE same feeling of pity [by which Francis was moved toward other creatures] he also had towards fish, which, whenever he had the opportunity, he used to throw back into the water when they were taken alive, bidding them beware of being caught a second time. Once, when Francis was sitting in a boat near a port on the lake of Rieti, a fisherman caught a big fish called a tench, and respectfully offered it to him. He took it up joyfully and kindly, began to call it by the name of brother, and then put it back out of the boat into the water. Then he began devoutly to bless the name of the Lord, and while he continued thus for some time in prayer, the said fish played about in the water close to the boat, and did not leave the place where Francis had put him, until, having finished his prayer, the holy man of God gave him leave to depart.—1 *Cel.* 60, 61.

ON THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

WHEN some of the brethren asked Francis whether it were his pleasure that men of learning already received into the Order should apply themselves to the study of Holy Scripture, he replied: 'It pleases me well, provided, however, that, according to Christ's example, of whom it is written that He prayed more than He read, they omit not the study of prayer. Nor let them study merely in order to know how they ought to speak, but in order that they may do the things they have heard, and when they have done them set them before others to do. I wish,' said he, 'my brethren to be disciples of the Gospel, and so to profit in knowledge of the truth that they may grow in the purity of simplicity, and not divide the simplicity of the dove from the wisdom of the serpent, which our most excellent Master has by His blessed mouth joined together.'—*Bonaventura* xi. 1.

BROTHER GILES' RESPECT FOR THE MONKS OF S. SISTO

BROTHER GILES once went to the fountain of S. Sisto at Rome to draw water for the monks there. A man asked him for a drink. Brother Giles answered: 'How can I take the water-pot to the monks after some of the water has been drunk?' On this the man was angry, and railed on brother Giles with many abusive words. Brother Giles went back to the monks in great distress. Then he got a large vessel, returned to the fountain for water, and found the man still there. 'My friend,' said he, 'take and drink as much as thy soul longs for: do not be angry; for it seemed to me discourteous to take to those holy monks water from which one had drunk.' The man, filled with compunction, and constrained by brother Giles' charity and humility, acknowledged his fault, and thenceforth held him in great devotion.—*Fioretti* 229.

S. FRANCIS PREACHES TO THE BIRDS

WHEN S. Francis was journeying through the valley of Spoleto, he came to a spot near Bevagna where a great number of birds of different sorts were gathered together. On seeing this, S. Francis left his companions and ran eagerly towards the birds. When he was come close to them, and saw that they were awaiting him, he gave them his accustomed greeting. But, not a little surprised that they did not fly away, as they are wont to do, he was filled with joy, and humbly begged them to hear the word of God, and after saying many things to them, he added: 'My brother birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, and ever to love him, who has given you feathers for clothing, wings for flight, and all that ye had need of. God has made you noble among His creatures, for He has given you a habitation in the purity of the air, and, whereas ye neither sow nor reap, He Himself doth still protect and govern you without any care of your own.' On this (as he used to say himself) those little birds, rejoicing in wondrous fashion, after their nature, began to stretch out their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks, and to gaze on him. And then he went to and fro amidst them, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic. At length he blessed them, and, having made the sign of the cross, gave them leave to fly away.—1 *Cel.* 58.

S. FRANCIS' REVERENCE FOR WRITINGS

WHEREVER S. Francis found any writing, Divine or human, whether by the way, in a house, or on the floor, he picked it up most reverently and placed it in some sacred or decent place, in case the name of the Lord or anything pertaining thereto should have been written on it. And one day, when one of the brethren asked him why he so diligently picked up even writings of pagans, and writings in which the name of the Lord was not traced, he gave this answer: 'My son, it is because the letters are there whereof the most glorious name of the Lord God is composed. The good, moreover, that is in the writing belongs not to the pagans nor to any men, but to God alone, of whom is all good.' And, what is not less to be wondered at, when he caused anything to be written in the way of greeting or admonition, he would not suffer a single letter or syllable to be cancelled, even though (as often happened) it were superfluous or misplaced.—1 *Cel.* 82.

S. FRANCIS' STRICTNESS IN SAYING THE HOURS

S. FRANCIS used to say the Canonical Hours with no less reverence than devotion. For, though suffering from disease of the eyes, stomach, spleen, and liver, he would never, when reciting the Psalms, lean against a wall or door-post, but always said the Hours upright and bareheaded, without letting his eyes wander, and without interruption. When going on foot through the world he always stood still to say the Hours; and when, on account of infirmity, he was riding, he dismounted. One day, when he was returning from Rome, it was raining heavily, and though he was already wet through, he got down from his horse when he would say the Hours, and recited the office standing in the road amid the continued rain, with as much fervour of devotion as if he had been in church or in his cell. And [then] he said to his companion: 'If the body desires to eat its food in peace and quietness, which food together with itself will become meat for worms, with what quietness and peace, with what reverence and devotion, ought the soul to take its food, which is God Himself?'—*S. P.* 94; 2 *Cel.* 96.

S. FRANCIS AT TABLE WITH THE CARDINAL OF OSTIA

ONCE, when S. Francis was visiting the Cardinal of Ostia, he went out, as if by stealth, at the dinner-hour to beg alms from door to door, and when he came back the Cardinal had already gone in to table with many knights and nobles. S. Francis came up and put on the table before the Cardinal the scraps of black bread that he had gathered as alms, and took his place beside him, for the Cardinal desired that S. Francis should always sit by him. The Cardinal felt a little ashamed on seeing what S. Francis had done, especially on account of the newly-invited guests. After he had eaten a little, S. Francis took of his alms and sent a little to each of the Cardinals, knights, and chaplains on behalf of the Lord God. They all received the alms with great devotion, some eating the food, others putting it by out of reverence. After dinner the Cardinal took S. Francis into his chamber, embraced him, and said: 'My brother, why hast thou put me to shame in the house which is thine and thy brethren's by going for alms?' 'I have rather shown you honour,' S. Francis replied, 'for God is well pleased with poverty and with that especially which is voluntary begging.'—2 *Cel.* 73; *S. P.* 23.

S. FRANCIS' SCRUPULOUS AVOIDANCE OF HYPOCRISY

S. FRANCIS' study was to crush vainglory in the seed, and not to suffer that which might offend the eyes of his God to exist even for a moment. For oftentimes when he was being extolled by the acclamations of many, he would grieve and groan over it, immediately becoming sad. Once, in winter, his only covering being a single tunic patched with very common stuff, his companion procured a fox's skin and brought it to him, saying: 'Father, thou art suffering from infirmity of the spleen and stomach; I pray thee of thy charity in the Lord to allow this skin to be sewn underneath thy tunic, or, if not the whole, at least a little of it over thy spleen and stomach.' S. Francis replied: 'If thou dost wish me to have this done inside my tunic, let a piece of the skin of the same size be sewn on over the tunic outside, that all may thereby know that I am wearing a fox's skin inside also.' And so his companion had the skin arranged for him; but he did not wear it long, though it was very needful for him.—2 *Cel.* 130; *S. P.* 62.

S. FRANCIS RESCUES TWO LAMBS

S. FRANCIS once met a man carrying two lambs, bound and hanging over his shoulders, which he was taking to market to sell. When Francis heard them bleating, he was moved with compassion, and came near and touched them, showing pity for them like a mother towards her crying child. And he said to the man: 'Why dost thou thus torment my brother lambs by carrying them bound and hanging thus?' The man answered: 'I am taking them to market to sell, for I must get a price for them.' 'What will become of them afterwards?' said the holy man. 'The buyers will kill and eat them.' 'God forbid,' said Francis. 'This must not be; but take the cloak I am wearing for their price, and give the lambs to me.' The man gladly gave him the lambs and took the cloak, for it was of much greater value. (Francis had borrowed it that day from a faithful man, to keep off the cold.) After consulting with his companion as to what was to be done with the lambs, Francis gave them back to the man, charging him never to sell them or do them hurt, but to keep them, feed them, and take good care of them.—1 *Cel.* 79.

S. FRANCIS ENCOURAGES A TEMPTED BROTHER

ONCE, when one of the brethren was sitting alone with S. Francis, he said to him: 'Pray for me, kind father, for I believe I shall be forthwith delivered from my temptations if thou deign to pray for me. For I am afflicted above my strength, and I know that this is not hidden from thee.' S. Francis replied: 'Believe me, son, for I believe thee to be all the more a servant of God on this very account; and know that the more thou art tempted the dearer thou art to me.' And he added: 'Verily, I say unto thee that no one should deem himself a servant of God until he has passed through temptations and tribulations. Temptation conquered is in some sort the ring whereby the Lord espouses to Himself the soul of His servant.'—2 *Cel.* 118.

S. FRANCIS PERSUADES A MAN TO FORGIVE HIS ENEMY

AT Colle, in the territory of Perugia, S. Francis once found a poor man whom he had known in former days in the world, and said to him: 'Brother, how art thou?' But the other began angrily to heap curses on his lord, who had taken away all his goods, saying: 'Thanks to my lord, whom the Lord Almighty curse, I am but in a bad way.' S. Francis, pitying him in soul more than in body, because he was persisting in mortal hatred, said to him: 'Brother, forgive thy lord for the love of God, that thou mayest deliver thy soul, and it may be that he will restore what he has taken from thee. Otherwise, having lost thy property, thou wilt lose thy soul as well.' 'I cannot forgive him entirely,' said the man, 'unless he first restore what he has taken away.' Then S. Francis, having a cloak on his back, said: 'See, I give thee this mantle, and I entreat thee for the love of the Lord God to forgive thy lord.' Forthwith the man's heart was softened, and, moved by this act of kindness, he took the gift and forgave the wrongs he had suffered.—2 *Cel.* 89.

THE BISHOP OF ASSISI PUNISHED FOR DISTURBING S. FRANCIS AT PRAYER

WHILE S. Francis was praying one day at the abode of Portiuncula, the Bishop of Assisi happened to come to pay him a friendly visit, as he was in the habit of doing. He immediately entered the place, went without ceremony to the cell, not having been summoned, knocked at the door, and was about to go in. And behold, as he was putting his head inside, and perceived the holy man at prayer, forthwith a trembling seized him, his limbs stiffened, and he became speechless. Suddenly, by the will of God, he was forcibly driven out, and led away backwards for some distance. . . . The Bishop, abashed, returned to the brethren, and on opening his mouth to confess his fault he recovered his speech.—*2 Cel.* 100.

BROTHER GILES ADVISES A MAN TO KILL HIS RELATIONS

A MAN came to brother Giles, and told him that he desired by all means to enter the Order. Brother Giles listened to him, and said at last : ' If thou wilt do this, make haste and kill thy parents, thy brothers, and thy cousins.' He was confounded at these words, and, clasping his hands, said with tears : ' O brother Giles, how could I commit so horrid a crime ?' ' What a blockhead thou art !' said brother Giles. ' Is it possible thou canst be such a simpleton ? I mean not that thou shouldst kill them with the material sword, but with the mental, for " he who hateth not father and mother cannot be Christ's disciple." '—*An. Fr.* iii. 92.

HOW S. FRANCIS GOT THE BISHOP OF IMOLA'S LICENSE TO PREACH

ONCE, when S. Francis came to Imola, a city of Romagna, he presented himself before the Bishop of the place to ask him for license to preach. The Bishop said: 'Brother, it is enough for *me* to preach to my people.' S. Francis bowed his head and humbly went out; but after a short time he came back again. The Bishop said: 'What dost thou want, brother? What art thou seeking for now?' And Francis replied: 'My lord, when a father has driven a son out of one door he must come in again by another.' The Bishop, conquered by this humility, embraced him with glad looks, and said: 'Thou and all thy brethren may for the future take my general license to preach in my diocese, for [thy] holy humility has earned this privilege.'—2 *Cel.* 147.

BROTHER GILES' ZEAL FOR WORK AND PRAYER

[WHEN brother Giles was at Rome] he used at harvest-time to go with other poor folk through the fields gleaning the ears of corn that had been left; but if anyone offered him a sheaf of corn he would refuse it, saying: 'I have no barn wherein to bestow grain.' But even what he thus gleaned himself he gave to the needy.

One day while he was lodging at the monastery of the Four Saints by the Lateran, the cellarer of the monks was looking for a man to sift flour for him. Hearing this, brother Giles offered to do the work, and having made an agreement, he received seven loaves for the measure of flour he had sifted. The cellarer also gave him a certain number of loaves for carrying water and helping in the bread-making. But he rarely bound himself for a whole day, so that he might have opportunity for prayer; and if ever he did bind himself for the whole day, he always stipulated that he might have time to say his Hours.—*An. Fr.* iii. 82.

THE RIGHT SPIRIT IN WHICH TO GO FOR ALMS

ONCE, when the blessed Francis was at S. Maria de Portiuncula, a poor man, who was full of the Spirit, was coming along the road on his way back from gathering alms at Assisi, praising God with a loud voice with great gladness. When he was come near the church of S. Maria the blessed Francis heard him, and instantly went out with the utmost fervour and joy to meet him; then, with great rejoicing, he kissed the man's shoulder where he was carrying a bag containing the alms. Then Francis took the bag off the man's shoulder, put it on his own, carried it into the brethren's dwelling, and said to the brethren: 'This is the way I want my brother to go and come back with alms, glad, rejoicing, and praising God.'—*S. P.* 25.

S. FRANCIS PUNISHES A BROTHER FOR A HARSH JUDGMENT

ONCE, when S. Francis had gone to a certain place to preach, a poor infirm man came thither. S. Francis felt great pity for him, and began to speak to his companion about the man's poverty and infirmity. His companion replied: 'Brother, the man truly seems to be very poor, but perhaps in all the province there is no one richer in will than he!' S. Francis at once rebuked him sharply, and, on his owning his fault, said: 'Wilt thou do the penance for this that I shall bid thee?' 'Willingly.' 'Make haste, then; take off thy tunic; go and fall down naked at the poor man's feet; proclaim thyself guilty; and not only beg his pardon, but ask him to pray for thee.' So he went and did all that S. Francis had told him. Then he got up, put on his tunic, and came back to S. Francis, who said: 'Wouldst thou know how thou hast sinned against this man, or, rather, against Christ? Whenever thou seest a poor man, thou oughtest to consider Him in whose name he comes —I mean Christ, who took on Him our poverty and infirmity. For the infirmity and poverty of this man is, as it were, a mirror for us, wherein we ought with pity to observe and consider the infirmity and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ.'— *S. P.* 37; 2 *Cel.* 85.

AGAINST VAINGLORIOUS PREACHERS

THERE are many brethren who make it their whole study and care to acquire learning, and forsake their holy calling by wandering, both with mind and body, outside the way of humility and holy prayer. These, when they have preached to the people and know that some have been edified or turned to repentance thereby, are puffed up, and exalt themselves concerning that which is the work and gain of others; whereas they have preached rather to their own condemnation and hurt, and have wrought nothing therein according to the truth, save as the instruments of them through whom God has really gotten this fruit. For those whom they believe to be edified and turned to repentance through their own learning and preaching the Lord is edifying and turning by the prayers and tears of holy, poor, humble, and simple brethren, though these holy brethren are for the most part unaware of it. For so is the will of God, that they should not know it, that they may not have of it whereof to glory.—*Opusc.* 258.

SAYINGS OF BROTHER GILES

BROTHER GILES once said to a man who seemed much puffed up by his learning: 'If all the earth belonged to one man, and he did not till it, what profit would he have of it? But another man who has a little plot of the earth and tills it well gets crops out of it for himself and for others. Trust not, therefore, in thy learning, for if thou hadst all learning, but wroughtest nothing, it were of no avail to save thee.' Hearing once the owner of a vineyard near his convent chiding his labourers (who were talking a great deal) with the words, 'Work! work! and don't talk!' brother Giles came out of his cell, crying in fervour of spirit: 'Listen, my preaching brethren—listen to what that man is saying, "Work! work! and don't talk!"'—*An. Fr.* iii. 86.

BROTHER GILES ADVISES BROTHER GRATIAN TO HANG HIMSELF

BROTHER GRATIAN, who was almost always speaking of God, said to brother Giles: 'I can preach to others and advise them, and I seem to know what I ought to do myself; and, being able to do many things, I cannot tell to what work I ought chiefly to devote myself, and by what work I ought chiefly to please God; advise me, therefore, and tell me what thou thinkest.' Brother Giles answered: 'There is nothing whereby thou wouldst please God more than by hanging thyself.' After brother Gratian had entreated him for many days to expound that saying, he at length gave the following answer: 'A man who is hanged is not in heaven, but yet he is raised above the earth, and always looks beneath him; do thou likewise. Though thou be not in heaven, still mayest thou be raised above earthly things, and in virtuous actions mayest think humbly of thyself and await God's mercy.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 92.

S. FRANCIS COMFORTS BROTHER RICERIO

A CERTAIN brother named Ricerio, noble by birth, but more noble by character, a lover of God and a despiser of himself [was greatly distressed by the thought that S. Francis did not love him, for he considered] that if S. Francis loved anyone with the deepest charity, such a one would also be worthy to deserve God's favour, but that, on the other hand, anyone to whom S. Francis did not show himself well disposed and benign would fall under the wrath of the Judge on high. . . . And one day, when the blessed father was praying in his cell, and Ricerio was come to that place distressed by his wonted cogitation, the holy man, knowing of his arrival, and understanding his thoughts, at once sent for him and said: 'Let no temptation disturb thee, my son; let no cogitation afflict thee, for thou art most dear to me; and know that among those specially dear to me thou art worthy of my affection and intimacy. Come in to me confidently whenever thou wilt.' Ricerio wondered with great amazement, and thenceforth . . . as he grew in S. Francis' favour, so he began to have a larger trust in God's mercy.—1 *Cel.* 49.

OF MAKING PROVISION FOR 'BROTHER BODY'

BROTHER BODY must be provided for with discretion, dearest brethren, that the tempest of sloth be not raised by him. For the servant of God should satisfy his body with discretion as regards food, drink, sleep, and its other needs, so that he may not be wearied with watching and reverent persistence in prayer, and that brother body may not be able to grumble, saying: 'I am hungry; I cannot bear the burden of thy exercise; I cannot stand upright and apply myself to prayer, nor rejoice in my troubles, nor do other good things, because thou satisfiest not my needs.' But if the servant of God should satisfy his body with discretion and in accordance with virtue, and brother body, after having eaten enough food, should then grumble and be negligent, lazy, or sleepy in prayers, vigils, and other good works, let him know that a lazy animal wants the spur, and an ass that will not go requires the goad; and then let him chastise him for a bad and lazy beast who wants to eat and not to earn and not to carry the load.—*Opusc.* 246.

BROTHER MASSEO'S STRUGGLES FOR SELF-ABASEMENT

[THOUGH brother Masseo was naturally of a cheerful countenance, there was a time when he was very sad. The brethren asked if they had caused him distress, but he said]: 'The cause of my trouble is this. Though I have for a long time been trying to attain to such humility that I should deem myself viler and worse than other men, my reason could not persuade me that one who disciplines himself day and night by fasting and prayer and the constant practice of the virtues is not a better man than one who utters idle and vicious words all day long, says the office badly, and observes neither chastity, poverty, nor obedience. And my mind could not be bent to think so humbly of myself as that. But after much prayer and toil the Lord said to me: "That for which thou prayest thou canst not win by thyself, but by Me this grace shall be given thee." Now, however, I am sad because I cannot get to the point of feeling that if anyone cut off my hands or feet or plucked my eyes out, though I had served him to the best of my power, still I could love him as much as I did before, and be equally pleased to hear him well spoken of.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 120.

BROTHER MASSEO'S COUNSEL AGAINST EVIL-SPEAKING

AT Cibottola [near Perugia] there was a certain steward of the brethren who was often murmuring about the other brethren, and telling tales of the bad things he had seen them do or heard reported of them. Brother Masseo was distressed at this, but, out of reverence for the Warden, said nothing to the man for some time. At last he took him aside, and said to him : 'My son, I pray thee ever to keep before thee the good deeds of good men and of the Saints ; so from bad shalt thou become good, and from good thou shalt become still better. But if thou settest before thine eyes the deeds of bad men, thinking about them and disclosing them to others, from good thou shalt become bad, and from bad thou shalt become still worse.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 120.

BROTHER GILES ADVISES A LAYMAN NOT TO PRAY BY DEPUTY

A LAYMAN asked brother Giles to pray to God for him. He answered: 'Pray for thyself; why, being able to go, dost thou stay behind and send another in thy place?' 'What a thing to say, brother Giles! I am a sinner, and far removed from God, but you are a friend of God, and can therefore find Him quickly on behalf of yourself and of others.' And the holy man said: 'Dear brother, if all the open spaces in Perugia were full of silver and gold, and proclamation were made through the city that anyone might take it, wouldst thou send a messenger to get it for thee?' 'Certainly not,' replied the other, 'on the contrary, I should go myself and trust to no other, however faithful.' 'Even so is it with God,' said brother Giles. 'The whole world is filled with Him, all can find Him. Go, therefore, thyself, and send not another.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 107.

S. ANTONY AND THE TYRANT EZZELINO

S. ANTONY of Padua often preached boldly against the cruelties of the tyrant Ezzelino of Romano, and the latter, desiring artfully to prove the uprightness and inflexible justice of the man of God, sent him a splendid present by the hand of his servants, whom he charged, saying: 'Present this humbly and devoutly to brother Antony from me. If he takes it, kill him on the spot; if he indignantly refuses it, come back and do him no harm.' They came before him, and said: 'Thy son Ezzelino commends him to thy prayers, and begs thee to accept this little present, which he sends out of devotion to thee.' But S. Antony, with great indignation, rebuked them, and refused it all, saying that he would receive none of the plunder of men, that all their stuff might go to perdition, and that they were to depart at once lest the place should be defiled with their presence. When they had told the tyrant all that had happened, he said: 'It is a man of God, let him alone; he may say what he likes in future.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 139.

THE BRETHREN SHOULD BEHAVE AS MEMBERS OF A FAMILY

S. FRANCIS, in exhorting all his followers to charity, encouraged them to show to one another the kindness and friendliness of members of a family. 'I will,' said he, 'that my brethren show themselves the sons of the same mother, and that if one asks another for a tunic, or cord, or anything else, that other should give it liberally. Let them share their books and all their pleasant things; nay, let one compel another to take them.' And lest in this matter he should be speaking of anything which Christ was not working in himself, he was the first to do all these things.—2 *Cel.* 180.

S. FRANCIS WILL NOT BE A THIEF

WHEN S. Francis was returning from Siena he met a poor man, and said to his companion: 'Brother, we must give this cloak back to the poor man to whom it belongs, for we have borrowed it until we should happen to meet someone poorer than ourselves.' His companion, bearing in mind the father's necessity, persisted in opposing him, so that he might not provide for another by neglecting himself. But the holy man said: 'I will not be a thief; it would be reckoned to us as theft if we gave not to one in greater need.' So the other said no more, and Francis handed the cloak [to the stranger].—2 *Cel.* 87.

THE MIRACLE OF THE THREE LILIES

A DOCTOR of Divinity of the Order of the Preachers had for many years suffered from great doubt concerning the virginity of Mary, the mother of Christ. For he found it hard to believe that the Blessed Mary could have been mother and virgin at the same time. Hearing that brother Giles was a very enlightened man he came to consult him. Now brother Giles, knowing of his coming and his purpose by revelation of the Holy Ghost, went to meet him, and before the Preacher had come up to him, and in anticipation of what the Preacher would say, he struck the ground with a staff he was carrying in his hand, and said: 'O brother Preacher, a virgin before child-bearing!' and forthwith a beauteous lily sprang up where he had struck the ground. A second time he struck the ground in another place, and said: 'O brother Preacher, a virgin in child-bearing!' And another lily sprang up. Then, striking the ground a third time, he said: 'O brother Preacher, a virgin after child-bearing!' And a third lily sprang up. And this done, brother Giles fled away. But that Preacher was forthwith delivered from his temptation, and thenceforth held brother Giles in great devotion.—*An. Fr.* iii. 90.

S. FRANCIS DESCRIBES PERFECT JOY

THOUGH a Lesser Brother should give sight to the blind, should straighten the crooked, should cast out devils, should make the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and, what is more, should raise one that had been dead four days, therein is no perfect joy. . . . And if a Lesser Brother should preach so earnestly as to convert all the unbelievers to the Faith, therein is no perfect joy. But if, when we came to S. Maria degli Angeli wet through with rain and frozen with cold, filthy with mud, and suffering hunger, and knocked at the door, and the porter came in a rage and said, 'Who are you?' and we replied, 'We are two of your brethren,' and he contradicted us, saying, 'Nay, but you are two vagabonds who go about the world snatching away the alms of the poor,' and he did not open to us, but made us stand in the snow and rain, in cold and hunger until night—then, if we bore so many repulses and harsh words patiently without annoyance and repining, and considered in humility and charity that that porter knew us for what we were, and that God had prompted him to speak against us, then write that therein is perfect joy. . . . Among all the unctions of the Holy Ghost which Christ has granted and will grant to His servants, the chief is to conquer self and willingly to bear reproach for the sake of God and the charity of God.—*Opusc.* 82.

BROTHER GILES' PENANCE

WHEN brother Giles was at Fabriano, in the neighbourhood of Perugia, he went into a wood one day that he might reflect upon his sins; then, calling a boy-brother, he stripped himself, and put his cord round his neck, bidding the boy drag him with the cord as far as the convent. When they came in, brother Giles cried with a loud voice: 'Brethren, have mercy on me a most miserable sinner!' The brethren came about him, and, seeing him thus naked, began to weep bitterly, and said to him: 'Put on thy tunic, father.' But he said: 'I am not worthy to be a Lesser Brother; yet if you will give me back my tunic of your mercy, and as an alms, I receive it, though unworthy.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 79.

S. FRANCIS COMMENDS POVERTY TO THE BRETHREN

KNOW ye, dearest brethren, that Poverty is the queen of virtues, because she shone forth so pre-eminently in the King of Kings and the Queen His Mother. Know, my brethren, that Poverty is the special way of salvation, as being the nurturer of humility and the root of perfection, whose fruit is manifold, but hidden. For Poverty is the 'treasure hid in a field' in the Gospel, and in order to buy it everything must be sold, and what cannot be sold must be despised in comparison of it. He who would rise to the utmost height of Poverty must not only renounce the wisdom of the world, but even, in some sort, skill in letters, in order that, being stript of such possession, he may enter upon the powers of the Lord, and offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. For he by no means perfectly renounces the world who keeps back within the secrets of his heart the purse of his own inclinations. In all things, therefore, let holy Poverty shine among you, and especially in the houses that you shall build, bearing in mind that word of the Gospel that 'the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay His head.'—*Opusc.* 240.

STORY OF S. ELIZABETH AND THE LEPER

THERE were dwelling in the castle of Neuenburg Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia, with his wife S. Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, and the Lady Sophia of Bavaria, the mother of the said Prince. Now, Elizabeth, a lover of humility and follower of mercy, had laid a certain leper, when he had been bathed, in the Prince's bed, and when her mother-in-law found it out she took her son by the hand, and brought him to the bed, saying: 'Know that Elizabeth is thus wont to defile thy couch!' Then did God open the inward eyes of the devout Prince, who beheld the Crucified laid in the bed; and, uplifted by that sight, the pious Prince begged his sacred consort that she would often fill his bed thus; for he understood that in His sick members Christ is cherished and received.

That holy matron Elizabeth was found worthy of being comforted by a letter from S. Francis before her death, and was a mother of all the poor, especially of the Lesser Brethren.—*An. Fr.* ii. 33.

S. ELIZABETH AND THE BLIND MAN

S. ELIZABETH had built a hospital wherein she ministered most devoutly to the poor. But she did not like to receive any sick person there unless he had first made his confession, knowing that a sinner is not worthy of the bread he eats. A certain blind man asked to be received there, but on being refused admission because he had not confessed, he was angry, and blasphemed the Lord. However, on being rebuked by the Saint and a certain devout Lesser Brother, he confessed, and was admitted. But that brother said to the Saint: 'Lady, since thou hast given him food, give him back his sight also.' 'That were much,' said she, 'but do thou try to get him one eye, while I will labour for the other.' So the brother prayed to God, and there was given back to the blind man one very small eye; but the Saint by prayer gave him back another, which was larger. And so he saw perfectly; and by the inequality of the eyes is perhaps set forth the difference between the two suppliants, and the inequality of their merits.—*An. Fr.* iii. 222.

THE SOW AND THE LAMB

IT chanced that a certain ewe brought forth a lamb one night when the servant of the Most High was lodging in the monastery of S. Verecondo, in the diocese of Gubbio. But a cruel sow that was there spared not the innocent creature's life, but ravenously bit the lamb to death. . . . When the tender father heard this he was moved to wondrous pity, and, at the recollection of another Lamb, bewailed before all who were present this lamb that had been killed, saying: 'Alas, brother lamb, innocent creature, who representest the everlasting advantage of us all! Cursed be the pitiless one that slew thee, and let no man nor beast eat of her!' Wonderful to relate, that baleful sow immediately sickened, and after suffering torments for three days, at length paid the penalty of death. It was cast into the ditch, where its carcass lay for a long time dried up like a board, nor furnished food to any famished creature.—2 *Cel.* III.

AT the time when the brethren began to multiply in Germany, two of them came to the castle of Michelstein, and were kindly welcomed by the lord of the castle, though he was about to fight with his enemies next day. After supper the lady of the castle begged them to pray earnestly to God that He would mercifully preserve her husband from the imminent peril of war. The elder of the brethren replied: 'Fear not, lady; trust in the Lord and in the merits of our blessed father Francis; and know that the appointed battle will not come to pass, but that both sides shall make peace in a wonderful way, and return in safety.' Next morning, when both armies were drawn up in array, and while the brethren, with the lady of the castle, were engaged in earnest prayer, the spirit of peace came upon a Count who was one of the lord of Michelstein's enemies, and with a few men he went to the lord of Michelstein and said: 'My lord, have we not had enough of this long-standing folly of ours? Were it not better to make peace than to continue a strife which has caused us so much loss and expense?' The lord of Michelstein consented, and so peace was made without any mediator save God only between men who had been at strife for twenty-two years.—*An. Fr.* ii. 35.

BROTHER GILES AND THE TWO CARDINALS

TWO Cardinals once came to brother Giles that they might hear from him the words of life. And as they were about to withdraw, they asked him to pray for them. He answered: 'What need is there that I should pray to God for you, seeing that ye have greater faith and hope than I?' 'How so?' said they. 'Because ye with so much of riches, honours, and worldly prosperity hope to be saved,' answered brother Giles, 'whereas I, with so much calamity and adversity, fear to be damned.' Whereat they were pricked in their heart, and departed from him changed for the better.—*An. Fr.* iii. 93.

S. FRANCIS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THOSE IN HIGH STATION

'LET not us' [said S. Francis] 'judge nor despise those that live delicately and wear fine and superfluous apparel. God is their Lord as well as ours, and He can call them to Himself, and justify them when called. Therefore, let us respect such as our brothers and our lords; for they are brothers because created by one and the same Creator, and our lords in so far as they help the good in their repentance by supplying them with what is necessary for the body.'—*Opusc.* 234.

A CELESTIAL MUSICIAN

WHEN S. Francis was at Rieti for the cure of his eyes, he called one of his companions who had been a lute-player in the world, and said . . . : 'Brother, I would have thee secretly borrow a lute, so that by a virtuous song thou mightest give some solace to my brother body, which is full of pains.' The brother answered: 'Father, I am not a little ashamed to do so, lest men might think that I am tempted by such frivolity.' 'Let us give it up, then, brother,' said Francis. 'It is good to give up many things to avoid shocking the opinion of others.' The next night, as the holy man was watching and meditating on God, suddenly there sounded a lute of wondrous harmony and sweetest melody. No one was seen, but the music, as it floated hither and thither, marked the movements of the lute-player passing to and fro. At length, fixing his spirit on God, the holy father enjoyed such sweetness in those melodious strains that he fancied himself transported into the other world.—2 *Cel.* 126.

S. FRANCIS REBUKES A BROTHER OF GLOOMY COUNTENANCE

SEEING one of his companions walking along with bent head and gloomy countenance, Francis rebuked him, saying: 'Even though thou be sorry for thy sins, brother, why dost thou make outward show of grief for thy wrong-doings? Keep this sorrow between thyself and God, and pray Him of His mercy to forgive thee and restore to thy soul the joy of His healing, whereof it has been deprived by sin. But before me and others show thyself as always having joy; for it is not meet for a servant of God to show sadness outwardly, or to have a clouded face.' Yet must it not be understood or supposed that our father, a lover of all gravity and decorum, desired that such joy should be manifested by laughter or by so much as the smallest idle word, since thereby vanity and folly rather than spiritual joy is shown. Nay, in a servant of God he singularly disliked laughter and frivolous talk.—*Opusc.* 306; *S. P.* 96.

S. FRANCIS RESTORES A 'BORROWED MANTLE

WHEN S. Francis was staying at the Bishop of Rieti's palace to be cured of a disease of the eyes, a poor woman suffering from the same ailment came to consult the doctor. [S. Francis, having heard of her poverty from the doctor], called one of the brethren, who was his Warden, and said to him: 'Brother Warden, we must restore the property of another.' 'What does that mean, brother?' 'That mantle which we have borrowed from that poor sick woman we must give back to her!' And his Warden said: 'Brother, the mantle is mine, and has not been lent us by anyone . . . but do as thou thinkest best.' Then S. Francis joyfully called a certain friend of his, a spiritual man, and said to him: 'Take this mantle and twelve loaves with it, and go to the poor woman with the bad eyes, whom the doctor will point out to thee, and say to her: "The poor man to whom thou lentest this mantle thanks thee for it: but now take what is thine own."' He went, and spoke as he had been told to. The woman, thinking it was in joke, answered with shame: 'Let me alone, for I don't know what thou art talking about.' But he placed the mantle and the twelve loaves in her hands. When she saw that he was in earnest, she took the gift, rejoicing and praising the Lord.—*S. P.* 33; 2 *Cel.* 92.

THE DEVIL IN THE PILLOW

WHEN S. Francis was at the hermitage at Greccio, suffering more than usual from the infirmity of his eyes, he was induced, contrary to his custom, to use a small pillow. In the morning watch at the end of the first night he called his companion and said to him: 'Brother, I have not been able to sleep to-night, nor to remain upright for prayer; my head trembles, my knees sink under me, and my whole body is out of gear, just as if I had eaten bread made of darnel. I believe the devil is in this pillow which I have at my head; take it away, for I won't have the devil at my head any longer.' His companion caught the pillow which Francis had thrown at him, to carry it away. So he went out, and at once lost the power of speech, and was oppressed and bound by such horror that he could move neither feet nor arms. After a little, S. Francis, who knew what had happened, called him, and he was set free. . . . And Francis said: 'Very crafty and subtle is our foe, for, when he cannot hurt the soul within, at least he gives the body matter for murmuring.'—*2 Cel.* 64.

S. FRANCIS AND THE DISSOLUTE CANON

WHEN S. Francis lay sick in the palace of the Bishop of Rieti, a certain dissolute and worldly canon had been seized with illness, and lay in bed compassed about on all sides with pains. He caused himself to be carried before S. Francis, and begged him with tears to sign him with the sign of the Cross. And S. Francis said to him: 'Since thou hast lived in the past according to the desires of the flesh, without fearing God's judgments, how shall I sign thee with the Cross?' Then he said: 'I sign thee in Christ's name; but know that if, after having been delivered, thou return to thy vomit, thou shalt suffer heavier things.' And he added: 'For the sin of ingratitude worse things than the former are ever added.' So he made the sign of the Cross over him, and forthwith he who had been lying bowed together rose up whole, and, praising God, cried: 'I am set free!' (Now, the bones of his loins, in the hearing of many, made a noise like that of dry pieces of wood broken by the hand.) [After a short time he fell back into sin], and one evening when after supper he was sleeping at the house of one of his fellow-canons, the roof fell in; the other inmates all escaped death, and he alone perished.—*2 Cel.* 41.

'S. FRANCIS' CURSE ON BRETHREN WHO SET A BAD EXAMPLE

[TWO brethren, in order to mark their contempt of themselves, had allowed their beards to grow to excessive length, and had been warned by the Bishop of Fondi against bringing their Order into disrepute by such extravagance. S. Francis, hearing of the incident, exclaimed]: 'O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst choose the Apostles twelve in number, and though from this number, one fell, the rest clave to Thee, and preached the Gospel, being filled with one spirit; Thou, Lord, in this last hour, remembering Thy mercy of old, hast planted the Religion of the brethren to prop Thy faith, and that the mystery of Thy Gospel may be fulfilled by their means. Who, then, shall make satisfaction for them before Thee, if not only do they not display examples of light to all men (for which purpose they have been sent forth), but rather show forth works of darkness? Let them who by their evil example confound and destroy that which Thou hast built up in the past by the holy brethren of this Order, and dost not cease to build up—let them be cursed by Thee, most holy Lord, by all the Court of Heaven, and by me, thy little servant.'—*2 Cel.* 156.

*THE Lord saith in the Gospel, 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you,' etc. He truly loves his enemy who complains not of the wrong his enemy has done him, but burns for the sin of his own soul because of the love of God, and shows love to his enemy by his deeds.

*Many are they who when they sin or suffer wrong often blame their enemy or their neighbour. But this is not right, for each one has in his own power his enemy—namely, the body, by which he sins. Blessed, therefore, is that servant who ever keeps captive that enemy that has been placed in his power, and wisely guards himself from him, for so long as he does this no other enemy, visible or invisible, can do him harm.—*Opusc.* 64, 66.

S. FRANCIS LAMENTS THE DEGENERATION OF THE BRETHREN

S. FRANCIS said: 'Although at the time when I resigned my office among the brethren I excused myself before them in Chapter-general on the ground that I could no longer take charge of them on account of my infirmities, yet if the brethren would [even] now walk according to my will, I would not, for their consolation and profit, that they should have any other Minister but me until the day of my death. For if a good and faithful subject knows and observes his Superior's will, the Superior need have but little anxiety about him. Indeed, I should rejoice so much over the goodness of the brethren because of their own gain and mine that even if I were lying sick in bed it would not irk me to give them satisfaction, because my office of Superior is spiritual only—namely, to keep vices in subjection, and correct and amend them in spiritual sort. But since I can no longer amend and correct them by admonition and example, I will not become an executioner to punish and to scourge, like the magistrates of this world. . . . Nevertheless, I shall not cease until the day of my death to teach the brethren by practice and example to walk in the way which the Lord has shown me.'—*Opusc.* 382.

S. FRANCIS IS PERSUADED TO RESORT TO PHYSICIANS

[TOWARDS the close of Francis' ministry], amid the weakness of the flesh, his spirit became even more active than before. So earnestly was his affection set on the salvation of souls, and such was his thirst for his neighbour's advantage, that when he could no longer walk he went round the country riding on an ass. The brethren often warned him with the most urgent entreaties that he should in some sort restore his sick and greatly enfeebled body by the aid of physicians. But he, with that noble spirit of his fixed on Heaven, and longing only to be dissolved and to be with Christ, altogether refused to do it. Then, for that he had not yet fulfilled those sufferings of Christ which were still lacking in his flesh, there came upon him a grievous infirmity of the eyes, according as God multiplied His mercy on him. . . . And at length brother Elias, whom he had chosen for himself in place of a mother, and had made the father of the other brethren, urged him not to shrink from medicine, but to receive it in the name of the Son of God by whom it had been created, even as it is written: 'The Most High hath created medicine out of the earth, and the wise man will not shrink from it.' Then the holy father acquiesced, and humbly obeyed the admonition.—1 *Cel.* 98.

HOW 'BROTHER FIRE' DID NOT HURT S. FRANCIS

WHILE suffering from infirmity of the eyes, Francis was advised by the physicians and urgently persuaded by the brethren to allow himself to undergo the remedy of cauterization. He humbly assented. The surgeon came, and told him that he would cauterize his face from the jawbone to the eyebrow of that eye which was more affected than the other. When the iron had been put into the fire, Francis, to encourage himself, so that he might not fear, spoke to the fire in these words: 'My brother fire, noble and useful among all other creatures, be kind to me in this hour, for I have loved thee of old, and will love thee for the sake of Him who created thee. I also pray our Creator that He may so temper thy heat that I may be able to bear it.' And having finished his prayer, he made the sign of the cross over the fire. When the cauterization was over, he said to the brethren, who had fled and were now returned: 'Faint-hearted men and of little faith, why did ye fly? I tell you truly I felt no pain nor heat of the fire;' and turning to the surgeon, he said: 'If the flesh is not well burnt, apply the iron again.' The surgeon, who had witnessed the power of the Spirit in the weakness of the flesh, said: 'I tell you, brethren, I have seen wondrous things to-day.'—*Bonaventura* v. 8; *S. P.* 115; 2 *Cel.* 166.

IN the sixth month before his death, while Francis was at Siena, whither he had gone for the cure of the infirmity of his eyes, he began to sicken in the whole of the rest of his body . . . so that he seemed to be drawing nigh to death. . . . Then he asked brother Elias that he would have him brought to Assisi. Elias did as he was bidden, and brought him to the longed-for place. The city rejoiced over the arrival of the blessed father, and the mouths of all the people praised God, for they hoped that the holy man might soon die [so that they might keep his remains], which was the matter of their so great exultation. It came to pass also by the will of God that his holy soul, when released from the body, passed to the kingdom of heaven from the place where, while still abiding in the flesh, the knowledge of heavenly things had been first vouchsafed to him, and the saving unction poured upon him. For though . . . he believed that in every place grace is bestowed on God's elect, he had found by experience that the place of the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula was filled with more fruitful grace, and frequented by the visitation of heavenly spirits. Therefore he often used to say to the brethren: 'See, my sons, that ye never desert this place.'—1 *Cel.* 105.

S. FRANCIS BIDS HIS ESCORT BEG FOR ALMS

WHEN the blessed Francis, in grievous sickness, and now near his end, was in the neighbourhood of Nocera, and the men of Assisi had heard of it, certain knights hastened to the place, that they might bring him to Assisi, for fear that he might die where he was, and that others might get his holy body. As they were bringing him, they stopped at a poor village called Satriano to dine ; and S. Francis rested in the house of a poor man, who gladly received him, while the knights went through the village to buy what was necessary, but could find nothing for sale. So they came back to S. Francis, and said playfully : 'Brother, you must needs give us of your alms, for we can get nothing to eat.' But he said to them with great earnestness : 'You can find nothing because you trust in your flies more than in God.' (For he called pieces of money 'flies.') 'But go again round the houses you have visited, and, putting shame aside, ask alms there for the love of the Lord God ; and the Holy Spirit will inspire them to give abundantly.' So they went and did as Francis had told them, and those from whom they asked alms gave them plentifully and cheerfully of what they had.—*S. P.* 22 ; 2 *Cel.* 77.

S. FRANCIS' PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

[AFTER S. Francis' removal from Siena to Assisi], his sickness increased, and, being deprived of all strength, he was unable to move at all. One of the brethren asked him which he would rather bear, this sickness, so lingering and so long, or to undergo from an executioner any martyrdom, however terrible. His answer was: 'That ever is and has been dearest, sweetest, and most acceptable to me which it most pleases the Lord my God to do in me and with me, to whose will I ever desire to be found conformable and obedient in all things. But in exchange for any kind of martyrdom it would be more distressing to me to bear this sickness, were it but for three days; and I do not say this having regard to the reward, but only to the distress which the suffering causes.' O martyr, and once again martyr, who with laughter and rejoicing bore that which to all was most bitter and grievous to behold!—1 *Cel.* 107.

THE MOUNTAIN REMOVED

AS the merits of holy Francis increased, so did his enmity with the old Serpent . . . and at a certain season there was sent to the holy father a most grievous temptation of the spirit, assuredly for the increase of his crown. Thenceforward he was so distressed in mind and body that many times he withdrew himself from the society of the brethren because he could not show himself joyful before them as he had been wont. He afflicted and mortified his body; he prayed earnestly and shed plenteous tears. After having been thus assailed for more than two years, one day while he was praying in S. Maria de Portiuncula, he heard in the spirit a voice saying: 'Francis, if thou wilt have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, thou shalt bid a mountain to remove, and it shall remove.' The holy man answered: 'Lord, which is the mountain?' And again he heard it said: 'The mountain is thy temptation.' Then he said with tears: 'So be it, Lord, as Thou hast spoken.' And forthwith all the temptation was driven away, and he was set free so perfectly that it seemed as though he had never had any temptation.—2 *Cel.* 115; *S.P.* 99.

S. FRANCIS' BODY WORN OUT BY THE FERVOUR OF HIS SPIRIT

[DURING the last two years of his life Francis] suffered frequent infirmities, being one who had during many years past perfectly chastised his body and brought it into subjection. For the space of eighteen years . . . his flesh had had little or no rest, travelling through many different and very extensive regions that the ready, devoted, fervent spirit which dwelt within might scatter everywhere the seeds of God's word. He was filling all the earth with Christ's Gospel, so that in one day he would make the circuit of four or five villages, or even towns, preaching to everyone the Gospel of God's kingdom; and, edifying the hearers by his example not less than by his words, he had made a tongue of his whole body. . . . But forasmuch as, according to Nature's laws and the manner of man's condition, the outward man must needs perish from day to day (though the inward be renewed), that most precious vessel, wherein was hidden a heavenly treasure, began on all sides to be shattered and to suffer the loss of all its strength.—1 *Cel.* 97, 98.

S. FRANCIS' REVERENCE FOR THE ANGELS

THE angels, who are with us in our warfare, who pray with us amid the shadow of death, Francis venerated with the utmost affection. He used to say that everywhere they are companions to be revered, but also to be called upon to guard us. He taught that their presence must not be outraged, and that we ought not to presume to do before them what we should not do before men. And forasmuch as the psalmody in the choir was performed in the angels' sight, he desired that all who could should come together to the oratory, and there sing with wisdom. He would often say that S. Michael should receive more excellent honour for that he had the office of presenting souls [before God] ; and in honour of S. Michael he used to fast most devoutly for forty days between the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of S. Michael ; for he said : 'Everyone should make some special offering of praise or of gift to God in honour of so great a Prince.'— *2 Cel.* 197.

S. FRANCIS IS LED BY GOD'S PROVIDENCE TO THE MOUNTAIN OF LA VERNA

TWO years before he gave up his spirit to heaven, S. Francis, after manifold labours, was led by the Providence of God to a high place apart, which is called the mountain of La Verna. And when (as he was wont) he had there begun to keep the forty days' fast in honour of S. Michael the archangel, there was poured out upon him in yet more abundant measure than before the sweetness of the contemplation of things on high. . . . And by an oracle of God there was put into his mind that in opening the book of the Gospel there should be revealed to him by Christ that which in him and concerning him would be most acceptable to God. Wherefore after earnest prayer he took the book of the Gospels from the altar, and caused it to be opened by his companion. And when the book had been opened thrice, and each time the Lord's Passion had met his eye, he understood that even as he had imitated Christ in the actions of his life, so he must be conformed to Him in the affections and sufferings of His Passion before he should pass out of this world.—*Bonaventura* xiii. 1.

S. FRANCIS TALKS WITH GOD ON THE MOUNTAIN OF LA VERNA

[DURING S. Francis' fast on La Verna] it was brother Leo alone who durst approach him once in the day to bring him bread and water, and once at midnight to say Matins. And sometimes brother Leo found him with his whole body raised above the earth to the height of a man, and then brother Leo would devoutly kiss his feet with tears (when he could reach them), saying : 'God be favourable to me a sinner, and bring me to Thy mercy through the merits of this most holy man. . . .' Once at midnight, not finding him in his cell, he went secretly looking for him on the mountain, and when he drew near he saw him in the moonlight on his knees, with his face turned to God, praying and saying these words : 'Who art Thou, O Lord my God? and who am I?—a worm, and thy little, poor servant.' And this he often repeated, but said naught else. And as brother Leo looked he saw a flame of fire beautiful and radiant, and pleasant to the eyes, coming down from the height of heaven on S. Francis' head, and from that flame a voice came forth, and S. Francis made answer thereto. —*An. Fr.* iii. 65.

S. FRANCIS AND THE FALCON

[DURING his forty days' fast on the mountain of La Verna], though S. Francis endured many assaults from the Devil, still he received many consolations from God, not only by angels' visits, but also by means of the wild birds. For during the whole time a falcon which was building its nest close to his cell used to come every night before Matins, and by its song and by the rustling of its wings at his cell used to wake him, and did not go away till he arose to say Matins. But if S. Francis was more tired at one time than at another, or was weak or sick, the falcon, like a discreet and compassionate person, would sing at a later hour. And so S. Francis took great pleasure in this clock, because the falcon's carefulness drove away all sluggishness from him, and urged him to prayer. The falcon used also sometimes to remain familiarly with him by day.—*Fioretti* 162.

S. FRANCIS GIVES A WRITING TO BROTHER LEO

WHILE the holy man abode shut up in a cell on the mountain of La Verna, one of his companions longed with great desire to have for his refreshment a writing of words of the Lord briefly annotated by the hand of holy Francis. For he thought thereby to escape, or at least to endure more easily, a grievous temptation (not of the flesh, but of the spirit) whereby he was molested. Though languishing with this desire, he feared to open the matter to the holy father, but . . . the Spirit revealed it to him. And one day S. Francis called him, and said: 'Bring me paper and ink, for I will write down words of God, and His praises, which I have pondered in my heart.' The materials he had asked for were brought forthwith, and with his own hand he wrote the praises of God and the words he chose to write, and lastly a blessing for that brother, saying: 'Take this paper, and keep it diligently till the day of thy death.' Immediately all that temptation was put to flight; the writing was preserved, and afterwards wrought wondrous things.—2 *Cel.* 49.

THE WASHING OF THE STONE

[ON the mountain of La Verna S. Francis showed to brother Leo a stone, and said to him]: 'Brother little sheep, wash this stone with water;' which done, he said: 'Wash it with wine;' which done, he said: 'Wash it with oil.' And so he did. Then S. Francis said: 'Wash it a fourth time with balm.' 'And how,' said brother Leo, 'might I find balm here?' S. Francis answered: 'Know, brother little sheep of God, that this is the stone whereon the Lord once sat when He appeared to me. And I bade thee wash it four times because then the Lord promised me four things for the Order: first, that whosoever should from his heart love the brethren and the Order should, God's blessing preventing him, make a good end; second, that an unrighteous persecutor of this Order should be signally punished; third, that a wicked brother persisting in his wickedness should not be able to continue long without either leaving the Order or being put to confusion within it; fourth, that this Religion should endure till the end of the world.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 67.

S. FRANCIS RECEIVES IN HIS BODY THE MARKS OF THE LORD JESUS

THE Lord Himself, willing to show to the whole world the fervour of Francis' love and his continual remembrance of Christ's Passion, honoured him in wondrous fashion while still living in the flesh by a unique privilege. For while he was being borne upward by seraphic ardour of longing to God, and was being transformed by the sweetness of suffering with Him into Him who of His exceeding love willed to be crucified, on a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was praying on the side of the mountain called La Verna, two years before his death, there appeared to him a seraph having six wings, and bearing between the wings the figure of a man most beautiful, crucified, with his hands and feet stretched out in the manner of a cross, most clearly showing forth the effigy of the Lord Jesus. . . . And as the vision faded away a wondrous ardour of love remained in the soul of Francis, and in his flesh there appeared the still more wondrous imprint of the stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the man of God concealed as well as he was able until his death, unwilling to make public this sacrament of the Lord, though he could not altogether hide it from being manifest at least to his familiar companions.—3 *Soc.* 69.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STIGMATA

BUT after Francis' most happy decease all the brethren who were present and very many lay-folk most plainly saw his body adorned with the stigmata of Christ. For they discerned in his hands and in his feet not only the prints of the nails, but also the nails themselves formed of his flesh and arisen in his flesh, and showing, moreover, the blackness of iron; and his right side, as though pierced by a lance, was overlaid with the red scar of a most true and manifest wound, which also often shed forth the sacred blood while he was alive. And the irrefragable truth of these stigmata appeared most openly and clearly not only in his lifetime and at his death by sight and touch, but also after his death through many miracles displayed in different parts of the world . . . by which miracles the hearts even of many who had not thought rightly concerning the man of God and had doubted of his stigmata were changed to such certainty of faith that those who had formerly been detractors of him became, by the working of God's goodness and the compulsion of the truth itself, his praisers and most faithful preachers.—3 *Soc.* 70.

BROTHER RUFINO TOUCHES THE WOUND IN S. FRANCIS' SIDE

THE blessed Francis concealed the stigmata most diligently from strangers, and from those about him he hid them so carefully that even the brethren at his side and his most devoted followers were for a long time unaware of them. But once, when Brother Rufino had put his hand into the holy man's bosom that he might scratch him, his hand slipped down to Francis' right side, and he happened to touch that precious scar, at which touch the holy man of God was not a little distressed, and, pushing the hand away, he cried that the Lord might forgive him (Rufino). And though this servant and friend of the Most High saw himself adorned with such and so many of these pearls (as with most precious jewels), and distinguished in wondrous fashion beyond the glory and honour of all men, he was not vain in his heart, nor did he seek to gratify [the curiosity] of any concerning this matter from lust of vainglory, but, that man's favour might not rob him of the grace bestowed on him, he exerted himself in every way he could to hide it.—1 *Cel.* 95.

OF THE HIDING OF SECRET THINGS

S. FRANCIS' custom was to reveal his chiefest secret to few or none. . . . Accordingly he ever had in his heart and often on his lips the saying of the Prophet: 'I have hidden Thy words in my heart, that I should not sin against Thee.' And whenever any lay-people came to him, and he wished to refrain from talking with them, he had given this token to the brethren who abode with him, that when he recited the aforesaid verse they were at once with all courtesy to dismiss visitors. For he had found by experience that it is a very evil thing to impart all things to everybody, and he knew that no one can be spiritual whose secret perfections are not more and greater than those which appear outwardly, and that such secrets, if made apparent, may give rise to different judgments among men. And he had found some who agreed with him outwardly, and disagreed with him inwardly, applauding him to his face and mocking him behind his back; who had got credit for themselves, and had made him somewhat mistrustful [even] of the upright.—1 *Cel.* 96.

IMPERTINENT CURIOSITY REBUKED

THOUGH the holy father could not wholly hide from his companions the stigmata in his hands and feet, he was distressed if anyone looked at them, and so his companions used to turn their eyes away whenever any necessity compelled him to uncover his hands or feet. Once when one of the brethren saw the stigmata in his feet, he cried : 'What is this, good brother ?' 'Mind your own business,' said S. Francis. Another time the same brother asked for S. Francis' tunic to shake it out, and, seeing that it was bloody, he said to the holy man after he had returned it : 'What manner of blood is this wherewith thy tunic seems stained ?' But S. Francis put his finger to his eye, and answered : 'Ask what *that* is, if you don't know it to be an eye.' He rarely washed his hands all over, only bathing the fingers, lest that thing should be revealed to the bystanders. His feet he washed most rarely, and not less secretly than rarely. If anyone asked for his hand to kiss he held out the fingers, and only so far as to leave place for the kiss, and sometimes he held out his sleeve only instead of his hand.—2 *Cel.* 135, 136.

A PIOUS FRAUD

WHILE the man of God abode at Siena, a brother from Brescia chanced to come there who greatly desired to see the stigmata of the holy father, and earnestly besought brother Pacifico that he might do so. Brother Pacifico said: 'When I am about to depart hence I will ask to kiss his hands, and when he gives them I will wink at thee, and thou wilt see.' So they both came to the holy man prepared to start, and Pacifico knelt down, and said to him: 'Bless us, dearest father, and give me thy hand to kiss.' He kissed the hand (unwillingly held out), and winked at the brother that he might look; then he asked for the other hand, and did the same. As they were departing, S. Francis suspected that there had been a pious fraud (as was indeed the case), and called brother Pacifico back, and said to him: 'God pardon thee, brother, for thou givest me much distress sometimes.' Pacifico at once fell at his feet, and humbly asked; 'What distress have I given thee, dearest mother (*sic*)?' But S. Francis made no answer.—2 *Cel.* 137.

S. FRANCIS DESIRES AT THE CLOSE OF HIS LIFE TO BEGIN TO SERVE THE LORD

[TOWARDS the close of his life S. Francis] burned with a great desire to return to the beginnings of humility, and, rejoicing in hope by reason of boundless love, he thought to bring back his body—now reduced to such extremity—to its former subjection. . . . 'Let us begin, brethren,' he would say, 'to serve the Lord God, for hitherto we have profited little or nothing.' He counted not himself as yet to have apprehended, and remaining indefatigable in his purpose to attain new sanctity, ever hoped that he might make a beginning. He desired once more to return to the service of lepers, and to be held in contempt, as he had once been. He purposed to fly from the intercourse of men, and betake himself to the remotest places, that so, having put off all care, and laid aside anxiety for others, the wall of the flesh alone might separate him from God. For he saw that many were running after offices of government whose temerity he hated, and whom he strove by his example to recall from such pestilence.—1 *Cel.* 103.

S. FRANCIS IS PERSUADED TO GIVE 'BROTHER BODY' SOME INDULGENCE

[S. FRANCIS in his last illness scrupled to allow his enfeebled body the indulgences which it required, and consulted one of the brethren about these scruples. The brother said]: 'Tell me, father, with what diligence thy body, while it could, obeyed thy behests?' S. Francis replied: 'I bear it witness that it has been obedient in all things, and has spared itself in nothing.... It has shirked no toil, has refused no discomfort, if only it might do as it was bid.' ... The brother said: 'Where, then, father, is thy liberality? where thy compassion and thine eminent discretion? Is it a worthy reward of faithful friends to accept a kindness gladly, and then in the time of need not to requite the giver's merit? How couldst thou have served Christ thy Lord all this time without the help of the body? ...' 'My son,' said the father, 'I confess that this is most true. ...' And he began joyfully to address his body thus: 'Rejoice, brother body, and forgive me, for behold now I gladly fulfil thy desires, and gladly hasten to attend to thy complaints.' But what could delight his frail and exhausted body now? What could sustain that which had given way on every side? Francis was now dead to the world, but Christ was living in him.—2 *Cel.* 211.

S. FRANCIS' PRAYER IN HIS SUFFERINGS

ONCE, when S. Francis' sufferings were more grievous than usual, a certain simple brother said to him: 'Brother, pray to the Lord that He deal more gently with thee, for He seemeth to be laying His hand more heavily upon thee than He ought.' On hearing this the holy man cried aloud with wailing, and said: 'If I knew not the simple purity that is in thee I would shun thy company henceforth, for that thou hast dared to judge God's judgments upon me to be reprehensible;' and then, worn out as he was by his long and grievous sickness, he dashed his feeble frame to the ground, and, kissing the ground, said: 'I yield thee thanks, O Lord God, for all these my sufferings, and I beseech Thee, O my Lord, to add to them, if it please Thee, a hundredfold, for this will be most acceptable to me, that in afflicting me with suffering Thou spare not, for that the fulfilment of Thy holy will is to me an exceeding great consolation.'—*Bonaventura* xiv. 2.

S. FRANCIS REFRESHED BY PARSLEY

ONE night towards the end of his last sickness the blessed Francis desired to eat some parsley, and humbly asked for it. When the cook was called to bring it, he answered that he could not then gather any in the garden, and said: 'I have been picking parsley every day, and have gathered so much that I could scarce find any more even by daylight, and how much less could I distinguish it from other herbs now that it is dark?' 'Go, brother,' said the holy man, 'never mind, and bring the first herbs thou touchest.' The brother went into the garden, picked the wild herbs which first came to hand, for he saw nothing, and brought them to the house. The brethren looked at the wild herbs, turned them over carefully, and found among them a tender leafy bit of parsley, of which Francis ate a little, and was greatly comforted.—*2 Cel.* 51.

OFFICIOUSNESS OF BROTHER ELIAS

[WHILE S. Francis was lying in his last sickness at the palace of the Bishop of Assisi he often caused his companions to sing his 'Praises of the Lord' for the consolation of those who were watching outside. Brother Elias fearing they might consider that this display of joy was unbecoming, and that Francis ought rather to be thinking of death, Francis said to him]: 'Rememberest thou how at Foligno thou sawest a vision, and didst tell me that one had told thee that I should not live more than two years? Before thou sawest that vision . . . I often used to think of my end by day and night. But from the hour when thou sawest that vision I have been still more careful daily to consider the day of my death.' And forthwith he added, with great fervour of spirit: 'Brother, let me rejoice in the Lord, and in His praises, and in my infirmities; for by the grace of the Holy Ghost working with me I am so united and joined unto my Lord that of His mercy I am well able to be joyful in Him, the Most High.'—*S. P.* 121.

GOD COMFORTS S. FRANCIS IN HIS EXTREMITY

[ONE night during his last illness the bitterness of his sufferings caused S. Francis to feel some pity for himself], but by praying to Christ he preserved the shield of patience unmoved. And as he prayed, amid the conflict there was vouchsafed to him from the Lord the promise of eternal life under this similitude: 'If the whole bulk of the earth were gold beyond price, and if in exchange for the heavy sufferings thou art enduring all thy pain were removed, and there were given thee for a reward a treasure of glory in comparison whereof the aforesaid gold should be nothing, and unworthy even to be named, wouldst not thou rejoice and gladly bear what thou art bearing for a moment?' 'I should rejoice indeed,' said the Saint; 'yea, and above measure I should rejoice.' 'Exult, then,' said the Lord to him, 'for thy sickness is the earnest of My kingdom, and do thou, secure through the merit of patience, confidently wait to inherit that kingdom.'—2 *Cel.* 213.

S. FRANCIS' MASTERY OF THE SCRIPTURES

WHEN S. Francis was ill and oppressed by pain everywhere, his companion once said to him: 'Father, thou hast ever fled for refuge to the Scriptures, they have ever furnished remedies for thy pains; I pray thee now also to have something read to thee from the Prophets, and perhaps thy spirit will rejoice in the Lord.' The holy man answered: 'It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture; it is good to seek out our Lord God in them; but for myself I have already mastered so much of the Scriptures that I have an ample store for meditation and reflection. I need no more, my son; I know Christ, poor and crucified.'—2 *Cel.* 105.

S. FRANCIS WELCOMES 'SISTER DEATH'

[WHEN he was lying in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi] a doctor of Arezzo, named Buongiovanni (Good John), who was very intimate with S. Francis, came to visit him; and S. Francis questioned him, saying: 'What thinkest thou, brother John, of this my sickness of dropsy?' (For he would not call him by his proper name, because he never would name anyone who was called 'Good' out of reverence for the Lord, who said: 'No one is good save God only'). . . . And the doctor said to him: 'Brother, it will be well with thee by God's grace.' Again S. Francis said to him: 'Tell me the truth. What thinkest thou? Fear not . . . for by the grace of the Holy Ghost working with me I am so united with my Lord that I am equally content to die or to live.' So the doctor said to him openly: 'Father, according to our physic thy sickness is incurable, and I believe thou wilt die either at the end of September or on the fourth of October.' Then S. Francis, as he lay in bed, stretched out his hands to the Lord with great devotion and reverence, and said, with great joy of mind and body: 'Welcome, my sister Death.' —*S. P.* 122 (5 *Redactio* i.).

HOW S. FRANCIS BADE BROTHER ANGELO AND BROTHER LEO SING TO HIM OF 'SISTER DEATH'

[DURING his last illness one of the brethren said to S. Francis]: 'Father, know of a surety that unless the Lord should send thee medicine from heaven thy sickness is incurable, and now, as the physicians have already said, thou hast but a short time to live. . . .' Then Francis, though more oppressed by infirmities than usual, seemed to derive from these words a new gladness of mind on hearing that sister Death was close upon him, and with great fervour of spirit he said: 'Therefore, if it please the Lord that I must die soon, call me brother Angelo and brother Leo, that they may sing to me of sister Death. When these two brethren were come before him full of grief and woe, they sang with many tears the hymn of brother Sun and the other creatures of the Lord which the holy man himself had made, and then before the last verse of the hymn he added some more verses about sister Death, saying:

'Praised be Thou, my Lord, for our sister, the death of the body, from whom no living man may escape.

'Woe to them who shall die in mortal sins.

'Blessed are they who are found in Thy most holy will, for the second death shall hurt them not.'

S. P. 123.

S. FRANCIS BLESSES HIS NATIVE CITY

WHEN the most holy father had been assured both by the Holy Ghost and by the physicians' sentence that his death was at hand, while he was still at the Bishop's palace, and felt that his sickness was continually increasing, and that his bodily strength was failing, he caused himself to be carried in his bed to S. Maria de Portiuncula, in order that he might end the life of the body in the place where he had begun to experience the life of the soul. But when the bearers were come to the hospital that is in the midst of the way by which you go from Assisi to S. Maria, he told them to set the bed down on the ground, and (since he was now scarce able to see by reason of long and grievous infirmity of the eyes) he caused the bed to be turned so that they might keep his face toward the city of Assisi. And raising himself a little in the bed, he blessed the city, saying: 'Blessed be thou of the Lord, city faithful to God, for through thee and in thee shall many souls be saved, and in thee many servants of the Most High shall dwell, and of thee shall not a few righteous be elected to the everlasting kingdom.' —*S. P.* 124; *Opusc.* 448.

S. FRANCIS BLESSES THE BRETHREN, AND, AFTER CHRIST'S EXAMPLE, GIVES A MORSEL OF BREAD TO EACH ONE OF THEM

[WHEN he was now near his end S. Francis sent for all the brethren who were in the place where he was], and as they sat around he laid his right hand on the head of each one, and blessed all those present and absent, and those who should enter the Order until the end of the world. Then, desiring in his death to imitate his Lord and Master whom he had perfectly imitated in his life, he sent for loaves and blessed them, and caused them to be broken into many small pieces, for he could not break them himself because of his extreme weakness. And he took them and gave a piece to each one of the brethren, bidding him to eat it all. And as the Lord before His death would, for a sign of His love, eat with the Apostles on Thursday, so His perfect imitator, the blessed Francis, would show the same sign of love to his brethren. And that he desired to do this after the likeness of Christ appears from his having asked afterwards whether the day were Thursday; and when he learnt that it was not, he said he thought it had been Thursday.—*S. P.* 88; *2 Cel.* 216.

HOW S. FRANCIS KEPT FAITH WITH LADY POVERTY UNTO THE END

[WHEN he was now nigh unto death S. Francis] ordered himself to be laid on the bare ground, that in that last hour wherein the enemy could yet rage against him he might wrestle with him naked. . . . Laid thus on the ground, he put off his garment of sackcloth, and raised his face (as he was wont) to heaven, and, covering with his left hand the wound in his right side that it might not be seen, he said to the brethren : ' I have done my duty, may Christ teach you yours.' [The brethren wept and wailed greatly at this sight, and when their sobs were somewhat abated], his Warden (with truer knowledge, through Divine inspiration, of the Saint's wish) hastily rose, took the tunic, the drawers and the little cap of sackcloth, and said to the father : ' Know that this tunic, these drawers, and this cap have been lent thee by me by order of holy obedience: but that thou mayest know that thou hast no property in them I deprive thee of all power of giving them to anyone.' S. Francis rejoiced and exulted for gladness of heart, for he saw that he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even to the end.—2 *Cel.* 214, 215.

S. FRANCIS ON HIS DEATH-BED COMFORTS THE BRETHREN

AS the hour of his death drew near, S. Francis sent for all the brethren in the place, and soothed them with comforting words touching his decease, and exhorted them to the love of God. He spoke at large on maintaining patience, poverty, and the faith of the Holy Roman Church, putting the Holy Gospel before all other institutions. As the brethren sat around he stretched forth his hands over them, putting his arms in the form of a cross, because he ever loved that sign, and he blessed all the brethren both present and absent in the power and name of the Crucified. And he added: 'Fare ye well, all my sons, in the fear of the Lord, and remain in it always; and forasmuch as trial and tribulation is at hand, happy are they who persevere in what they have begun. . . .' Then he asked to have read to him the passage in the Gospel according to John beginning, 'Before the Feast of the Passover,' etc.; while he, according to his power, broke out into the words of the Psalm, 'I cried unto the Lord with my voice,' and continued it to the end.—*Bonaventura* xiv. 5.

HOW THE LARKS SHOWED THEIR AFFECTION TO S. FRANCIS AT HIS DEATH

ABOVE all birds S. Francis loved that little bird the lark, which is called in the vulgar tongue *Lodola capellata* (hooded lark). And he would say of her: 'Sister lark has a hood like a Religious, and she is a humble bird, for she gladly goes along the way to look for grains for herself, and if she find any among the dirt she pulls them out and eats them. As she flies she praises the Lord very sweetly, like good Religious who despise earthly things, whose conversation is ever in heaven, and their intention ever set on praising God. . . .' And forasmuch as he had such thoughts concerning the larks, he always took great pleasure in seeing them. Therefore it pleased the Lord that these holy little birds should show some sign of their affection to him in the hour of his death. For late in the afternoon before the night when he passed away to the Lord a great multitude of larks came over the roof of the house wherein he lay, and fluttered in a circle round the roof, and, singing sweetly, seemed to be praising the Lord together.—*S. P.* 113.

THE WAILING OF THE POOR LADIES AT S. DAMIAN

[AS they bore Francis to his burial] they reached the place where he himself had planted the Religion and Order of Sacred Virgins and Poor Ladies, and here, as they laid him in the church of S. Damian, wherein his said daughters dwelt whom he had won to the Lord, a little window was opened through which the handmaids of Christ were wont at the appointed time to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Body. . . . And behold the Lady Clara . . . the mother of the rest, came with her daughters to look upon the father that spake not to them, and would not return to them, for he was hastening elsewhither. And looking on him with many tears, they began to cry with choked voices: 'Father, father, what shall we do? Why forsakest thou us in our misery, and to whom dost thou leave us in our desolation? Why didst thou not send us before thee rejoicing to the place whither thou art going? . . . What dost thou bid us to do shut up thus in this prison, us whom thou determinest never more to visit as thou usedst to do? . . .' And so they kissed his hands, adorned with most precious jewels; and when he was taken away the gate was shut upon them, which shall never more be opened to such woe.—1 *Cel.* 116, 117.

HOW S. FRANCIS APPEARED TO ONE OF THE BRETHREN

ON the night and at the hour when S. Francis died, the glorious father appeared to one of the brethren (a man of praiseworthy life who was then absorbed in prayer) clothed in a purple dalmatic, and followed by a countless multitude of men, from which multitude several detached themselves, and said to that brother : ' Is not this Christ, brother ?' And he replied : ' It is He.' Others again asked him : ' Is not this S. Francis ?' And the brother gave the like answer ' that it was he.' Truly it seemed to the brother and to all the multitude that the person of Christ and of S. Francis was one, a judgment which seems by no means temerarious to those of sound understanding, since he who cleaves to God is one spirit with Him, and God Himself shall be all in all.—2 *Cel.* 219.

A RELIC AT LA VERNA

A CELL was made on the mountain of La Verna, wherein the servant of God did most severe penance for forty days. When he departed thence at the end of that time, the cell, being in a lonely place, remained untenanted, and an earthen vessel, out of which the Saint used to drink, was left there. It happened that when some men visited the spot later out of reverence for the Saint, they found that vessel full of bees, who with wondrous skill were building their little cells therein, surely signifying the sweetness of contemplation which the servant of God had there enjoyed.—2 *Cel.* 169.

S. FRANCIS BLESSES THE BRETHREN

[ONCE when S. Francis was in grievous sickness, and it seemed as if he must die, some of the brethren came about him, and after bitter lamentations asked for his blessing. Then he said to them]: 'Call me brother Benedict of Pirato.' This was a holy and discreet priest who used to celebrate sometimes for S. Francis where he was lying sick, for always when he was able he wished to have or to hear Mass, however sick he might be. When brother Benedict was come, Francis said: 'Write that I bless all my brethren who are in the Order, and who shall come into it even to the end of the world. And since I cannot speak for weakness and the pain of my sickness, I declare my will and intention briefly to all the brethren present and to come in these three words—namely, that as a token of my memory, my blessing, and my testament, they ever love one another as I have loved and love them; that they ever love and observe Poverty, our Lady, and ever be faithful subjects to the prelates and clergy of Holy Mother Church.'—*S. P.* 87.

S. FRANCIS' TENDER CARE FOR THE BRETHREN

WHEN S. Francis could not rest because of the pain of his infirmities, and saw that the brethren were greatly distracted and wearied on his account . . . he began to fear lest, by reason of their excessive toil for him, they might in the slightest degree offend God by any little impatience. And so he said once to his companions with tender pity : ' Dearest brethren and my sons, let it not weary you to toil on account of my sickness, for that the Lord for the sake of me, His little servant, shall restore you in this world and the next all the fruit of those deeds which in caring for my sickness you are not now able to perform. Nay, your gain is much greater than if you were toiling for yourselves, inasmuch as he who is helping me is helping the whole Religion and life of the brethren. And ye may even say : " We are spending on thee, and the Lord will be our debtor on thy behalf." '—*S. P.* 89.

HOW THOSE IN AUTHORITY SHOULD BEHAVE THEMSELVES

[IN his latter days S. Francis] used to say that it was good and acceptable before God to have charge of others, and that those ought to undertake the care of souls who should seek naught therein of their own, but should always give heed to the will of God in all things—such men as should put nothing before their own salvation, should attend not to the applause, but to the profit of those put under them, seeking not pomp in the sight of men, but glory before God; such men as should not strive after office, but fear it; such men as should not be puffed up by it when they got it, but humbled, and when it was taken away from them should not be cast down, but exalted. But especially at that time, when wickedness had grown to such excess, and iniquity abounded, he pronounced that it was dangerous to rule and more profitable to be ruled.—1 *Cel.* 104.

THE PRAISES OF GOD

*THOU art the holy Lord God, Thou art the God of gods who only doest wondrous things. Thou art strong, Thou art great, Thou art most high, Thou art almighty, Thou art the holy Father, the King of heaven and earth; Thou art the triune God, Thou art good, Thou art all good, the highest good, the Lord God one and true. Thou art love and charity, Thou art wisdom, Thou art humility, Thou art patience, Thou art beauty, Thou art security, Thou art rest, Thou art joy, Thou art our hope and gladness, Thou art justice and temperance, Thou art fortitude and prudence, Thou art all-sufficing riches, Thou art gentleness, Thou art the protector, guard, and defender, Thou art our refuge and strength, Thou art our hope, Thou art our faith, Thou art our great sweetness, Thou art our eternal life, the great and wonderful Lord, the Almighty God, the merciful Saviour.—*Opusc.* 89.

S. FRANCIS' HUMILITY

HUMILITY is the guard and ornament of all the virtues. When the spiritual building does not rest on this foundation it tends to fall even when it seems to be growing. That nothing might be wanting to a man adorned with so many gifts, this grace filled S. Francis in more abundant measure, for he reputed himself nothing but a sinner, whereas he was the ornament and splendour of every kind of holiness. In order that he might lay the foundation which he had learnt from Christ, he strove to build himself on this virtue of humility. Forgetful of the things he had gained, he fixed his eyes on his failings alone, considering that more was lacking to him than was present with him. The only thing he coveted was to become better, and to add fresh virtues to the former, wherewith he was not content.—2 *Cel.* 140.

S. FRANCIS' CARE TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO THE BRETHREN

WHENEVER the hardness of his own life was blamed, S. Francis answered that he had been given to the Order for a pattern, that, like an eagle, he might incite his young ones to fly: and accordingly, though his innocent flesh, which was already subjecting itself voluntarily to the spirit, needed no scourge for offences committed, still, for example's sake, he renewed his chastisement of it, only keeping to these hard ways on account of others. And rightly, for more regard is paid to the deeds than to the words of those in authority. It was by his deeds that the father discoursed most sweetly, persuaded most readily, and proved most surely.—2 *Cel.* 173.

FROM S. FRANCIS' LETTER TO ALL THE FAITHFUL

*LET those who have received authority to judge ever exercise judgment with mercy, even as they would themselves obtain mercy from the Lord. For he shall have judgment without mercy who doeth not mercy. Let us, therefore, have charity and humility, and let us give alms, for these shall wash our souls from the defilements of sins. For men lose all that they leave behind them in this world, but they carry with them the wages of charity and the alms that they have done, for which they shall receive from the Lord a reward and worthy recompense. We ought also to fast and abstain from vices and sins and from superfluity in food and drink, and to be Catholics. We ought also to visit churches frequently, and to reverence the clergy for the sake of their office and administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ which they sacrifice, receive, and administer to others. And know we all of a surety that none can be saved but by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the holy words of the Lord which the clergy utter, proclaim, and administer, and which they alone and none others ought to minister.—*Epist.* ii. (*Opusc.* 8, 10).

S. FRANCIS TEACHES BROTHER ANGELO NOT TO FEAR DEVILS

S. FRANCIS heard that one of the brethren named Angelo was sore afraid of the evil angels by reason of a terrible fight he had had with them. S. Francis sent for him, and he confessed that this was so, and further begged that he might be allowed to have a companion to sleep with him in his cell by night, for he said that night-fears were greater and more troublesome than day-fears. 'Come, thou fearful one,' said the blessed father, 'why fearest thou weak and feeble foes, all whose strength and power, as thou well knowest, are under God's control? And that thou mayest prove this, I bid thee go to-night to the top of yonder mountain alone, and say with a loud voice: 'Ye proud devils, come to me now, all of you, do your worst, and exercise your fury upon me!' With humility he did so, and no devil came near him; and thenceforth he cast aside all his fear.—*Opusc.* 390.

OF REVERENCING THE CLERGY

*BLESSED is the servant who puts trust in the clergy who live uprightly according to the form of the Holy Roman Church, and woe to those who despise them; for, though they be sinners, no man ought to judge them, for that the Lord Himself alone reserves them for Himself to judge. For by how much greater than all others is their ministry of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which they receive and alone minister to others, by so much greater is the sin of those who sin against them than that of those who sin against any other men in this world.—*Opusc.* 74.

*LET all the brethren be Catholics, and live and speak as such. But if any one shall have erred from the Catholic faith and life in word or in deed, let him be utterly driven out from our brotherhood. And let us hold all the clergy and all Religious as lords in those things which concern the salvation of the soul, and are not inconsistent with our own Religion. And let us revere their Order, office, and administration in the Lord.—*Regula* i. 19 (*Opusc.* 148).

S. FRANCIS' AFFECTION FOR THE SUN AND FOR FIRE

ABOVE all creatures void of reason, S. Francis loved the sun and fire with most affection, for he used to say: 'In the morning when the sun rises every man ought to praise God who created him for our profit, for by him our eyes are enlightened by day; and in the evening, when night comes on, every man ought to give praise for brother fire, because by him our eyes are enlightened by night. For we are all, as it were, blind, and the Lord by these two brothers enlightens our eyes, and therefore we ought specially to praise the Creator for these and the other creatures which we daily use.' Which thing he himself also always did down to the day of his death. Nay, when he was oppressed with grievous sickness he himself would begin to sing the 'Praises of the Lord' which he had made concerning the creatures, and then he would make his companions sing them, so that he might forget the bitterness of his sufferings and infirmities in the consideration of the praise of the Lord.—*S. P.* 119.

S. FRANCIS' AFFECTION FOR WATER

NEXT after fire S. Francis singularly loved water, because by it is represented the holy penitence and tribulation whereby the defilements of the soul are washed away, and because the first washing of the soul is done by the water of baptism. And so when he washed his hands he would choose such a place that the water which fell should not be trodden by his feet. Also in going over stones he walked with great trembling and reverence, for love of Him who is called the Rock; wherefore, in saying those words of the Psalm, 'Upon a rock hast Thou exalted me,' he said, out of his great reverence and devotion, 'Beneath the foot of a rock hast Thou exalted me.' Moreover, he used to bid the brother who cut and made ready the firewood never to cut down a whole tree, in order that some part of the tree might always remain entire, for love of Him whose will it was to work our salvation on the wood of the cross.—*S. P.* 118.

*BY these marks may it be known whether the servant of God has the spirit of the Lord: If when the Lord works some good through him his flesh is not lifted up thereby (for the flesh is ever contrary to all good), but if rather he holds himself of less account in his own sight, and esteems himself the least among all other men.

*It is impossible for it to be known how much patience and humility the servant of God has so long as he is satisfied as regards what he wishes or what he needs. But when the time comes that they who ought to give him satisfaction do the contrary, the amount of patience and humility he shows then (and no more) is the measure of the patience and humility that he has.

*Blessed is that servant who does not exalt himself more concerning the good that the Lord says and does through him than concerning the good that He says and does through another. For that man sins who wishes to receive more from his neighbour than he wishes to give of himself to the Lord God.

*Blessed is the man who supports his neighbour according to the measure of his weakness in that wherein he, if in the like case, would wish to be supported by his neighbour.—*Opusc.* 66, 68, 70.

THE HUMILITY OF BROTHER MASSEO

WHEN S. Francis and his companions were once dwelling in some solitary place he gathered them all together, and said to brother Masseo : ' Brother, all these thy companions have the grace of prayer and contemplation, but thou hast the grace of utterance to give satisfaction to strangers. Wherefore I will that, in order that these others may be the better able to attend to prayer and contemplation, thou act as porter, alms-seeker, and cook, so that no one beside thee shall have any call for temporal things. When the brethren shall eat, thou shalt eat outside, so that before any strangers knock at the gate thou mayest satisfy them with some good words; and so no one need go out except thee. And thus shalt thou do in merit of saving obedience.' Masseo bowed his head, drew off his hood, and humbly obeyed, and so for several days he kept the gate, went for alms, and humbly cooked for the brethren.—*An. Fr.* iii. 115.

THE HUMILITY OF BROTHER MASSEO
(continued)

BUT brother Masseo's companions felt a great struggle in their hearts, because he was a man of as great perfection and prayer as they, and greater, and yet the whole weight of the service of the convent had been put upon him. So they begged their holy father to distribute those offices among them, for their consciences could not bear that so many burdens should be laid on him. When S. Francis heard this he called brother Masseo, and said: 'Thy companions wish to share in the duties I have laid on thee, and therefore I will that they be divided among you.' 'Father,' answered Masseo humbly and patiently, 'whatsoever thou layest upon me in whole or in part, I deem it all to be done by God.' Then S. Francis, seeing this charity of the others and the humility of brother Masseo, preached to them in wondrous fashion concerning holy humility, and afterwards distributed the offices among them, and blessed them all with the grace of the Holy Ghost.—*An. Fr.* iii. 115, 116.

FROM S. FRANCIS' LETTER TO ALL THE FAITHFUL

*LET us not be wise and prudent after the flesh, but simple, humble, and pure. . . . Never ought we to desire to be above others, but rather to be in submission and subjection to every human creature for God's sake. And upon all who shall have wrought such things and persevered therein unto the end shall the Spirit of the Lord rest, and He shall make His abode and dwelling in them, and they shall be the children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are the brides, the brothers, and the mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brides when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit ; we are His brothers when we do the will of His Father who is in heaven ; we are His mothers when we bear Him in our heart and body by love and a pure conscience, and bring Him to birth by doing good works which must shine for an example to others. O how glorious and how great it is to have a Father in heaven ! O how holy, fair, and amiable to have a Bridegroom in heaven ! O how holy and delightsome, well-pleasing, humble, peaceable, sweet, amiable, and above all things to be desired, to have such a Brother who laid down His life for His sheep !— *Epist.* ii. (*Opusc.* 12).

BROTHER GILES ON THE ENDURANCE OF TRIBULATION

ONE of the brethren said to brother Giles: 'Father, if great adversities or tribulations come in our time what are we to do?' He answered: 'My brother, I would have thee know that if the Lord rained arrows out of heaven they could not hurt us if we were such as we ought to be; for if a man were in truth such as he ought to be, every ill, every tribulation, would be turned for him into good; and so in like manner to the man who has an evil will all good things are turned to evil and judgment. If thou wilt be saved and go to the glory of heaven, thou must never desire that any vengeance or punishment be inflicted on any creature, for the inheritance of the Saints is always to do good and always to receive evil. If thou didst truly know how and how grievously thou hast offended thy Creator, thou wouldst acknowledge that it is meet and right that all creatures should persecute thee, and give thee punishment and tribulation to avenge the offences thou hast done to their Creator.—*Fioretti* 243, 244.

S. FRANCIS, DISTRESSED BY THE EVIL EXAMPLE OF THE BRETHREN, IS COMFORTED BY THE LORD

[FRANCIS, being distressed by the evil example of some of the brethren, betook himself to prayer, and thereupon the Lord said unto him]: 'Tell Me, thou simple and unlettered mannikin, wherefore thou art sad when anyone leaves the Order, and when the brethren walk not by the way I have shown thee? Tell Me also who planted this Religion of the brethren? Who is it who turns man to repentance? Who gives the power to persevere therein? Is it not I? I chose thee not to set thee over My family as a learned and eloquent man, but I chose thee as a simple man, that both thou and others may know that I will watch over My flock; and I have set thee as a sign to them that it may be their duty to work in themselves those things that I work in thee. . . . And that thou mayest know how that I freely love the life and Religion of the brethren, even though there should remain but three brethren in the whole Religion, yet shall that be My Religion, nor will I forsake it for ever.' And S. Francis was greatly comforted by these words, for he was grieved beyond measure whenever he heard of any evil example among the brethren.—*S. P.* 81 (40 *Redactio* i.).

OF THE DUTY OF MEDITATING ON CHRIST'S PASSION

EVER have before your eyes the way of humility and poverty and of the holy Cross, along which our Lord Jesus Christ has driven us. Consider that if it was needful for His Divine Majesty to enter into His glory through suffering, much more will it be necessary for us, such monstrous sinners as we are, to go by the way of the Cross and Passion. . . . A good will and longing to imitate our Saviour's Passion is a peculiar gift which the Holy Ghost gives to the soul that truly loves and serves God, for the soul which sticks to its own likings alone, and is fond of itself alone, does not love, but rather shrinks from this teaching of the Holy Ghost, and deems it not necessary to become a sharer in Christ's Passion in order to win perfection. Nay, promising itself greater advantage by other roads, which are not true roads, but hidden precipices, and fleeing from the gall of tribulation by human and self-willed contrivances, it has its heart fixed in its own affections and blinded by them, asserting that it can serve God better in such-like freedom of life. Nor does it care in the smallest measure for the countless delights which that soul inwardly receives that has been wholly absorbed in such contemplation, and in suffering with its Lord, for these cannot be tasted unless some tribulation have been suffered for Christ.—*Opusc.* 276.

OF SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

THE soul that has been cleansed and stripped of its own affections humbly allows the Holy Spirit to guide it and to work in it at His good pleasure as the best master of that unexampled teaching which the Lord has left written in the books of His humility, His patience, and His Passion, which are the sure roads to Christian perfection. Wherefore that soul which has obtained purification from God vehemently longs to be transformed into those sufferings of His, comparing all other roads and consolations to mortal foods which perish, and this one alone to the healing medicine which is bitter to taste but most sweet in operation. Wherefore, preferring health to taste, that soul proves how wondrous is the sweetness of the abiding life that despises momentary and mortal consolation, and clearly proves that its love can rest in nothing else more perfectly than in the loving suffering with Christ, and that the more it is transformed into Christ crucified, the more it is transformed into God exalted and glorious.—*Opusc.* 278.

THE Manhood is never separated from the Godhead, and Christ Himself prayed the Father, saying: 'I will that where I am Mine may be also.' And so the soul contemplates either state of the Lord to the end it may never be separated from Him. For if the soul flies from Him in His Passion it shall be separated from Him in His glory, according to the Apostle Paul's words: 'If, however, we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.' The soul, therefore, contemplates Christ mortal and immortal, and of these states one is that of those who still are running, the other that of those who have already received the prize. Wherefore, as the prize is only given to those who run, so heaven is only given to those who take up the Cross, for the servant ought not to be better off than the Lord, nor the disciple above the master. Accordingly we see that God imparts His grace to them who in this way follow Him, and contrariwise that He takes it away from those presumptuous ones who say that they will be united to Him by means of other chimeras, yet never get away from themselves; but at last they come to a miserable end.—*Opusc.* 280.

BROTHER JUNIPER'S PITY FOR THE POOR

BROTHER JUNIPER was so moved by pity for the poor that if ever he met with anyone who seemed more poorly clad than himself he at once cut off a sleeve, or the hood, or some piece of his tunic, and gave it to the poor man; wherefore the Warden forbade him to give away his tunic or any part of it. One day, meeting a poor man, almost naked, who asked alms of him, he said: 'I have nothing to give thee but my tunic, which I am forbidden to give by my Superior. But if thou wilt strip it off me I will not resist.' So the poor man stripped him, took the tunic, and left brother Juniper naked. When he returned to the convent he was asked where his tunic was. 'A good man took it off my back and went away with it,' answered he.—*An. Fr.* iii. 58; *Fioretti* 209.

BROTHER GILES REBUKES A MURMURING RELIGIOUS

A RELIGIOUS was once murmuring at his Superior in brother Giles' presence on account of a hard thing he had ordered him to do. Brother Giles said to him: 'Dear brother, the more thou murmurest the more thou increasest thy burden, and the heavier it will be for thee to bear; and the more humbly and devotedly thou shalt bow thy neck under the yoke of holy obedience, the lighter and sweeter that obedience will be to bear. But methinks thou art not willing to be reproached in this world for Christ's sake, and yet wouldst be honoured with Christ in the other; thou art not willing to be persecuted in this world, nor to be accursed for Christ, and yet wouldst be blessed and received by Christ in the other; thou wouldst not toil in this world, and yet wouldst rest in the other. Brother, brother, thou art woefully mistaken, for it is by the way of abjectness, shame, and reproach that man attains to the true honour of heaven, and it is by bearing derision and cursing patiently for Christ's sake that man attains to Christ's glory.'—*Fioretti* 244.

ADMONITIONS OF S. FRANCIS

*BLESSED is the servant who bears chastening, accusation, and reproof as patiently from another as from himself. Blessed is the servant who when reproved takes it meekly, obeys with compunction, makes humble confession and willing satisfaction. Blessed is the servant who is not swift to excuse himself, but humbly bears shame and rebuke for sin where he has committed no fault.

*Blessed is the servant who shall be found as humble among his inferiors as if he were among his lords. Blessed is the servant who ever abides under the rod of correction. Faithful and wise is the servant who, whensoever he offends, delays not the inward punishment of contrition and the outward of confession and satisfaction by deed.—*Opusc.* 72, 74.

BROTHER GILES ON THE FEAR OF GOD

MORE than any other of his enemies must man fear lest his own wickedness conquer or deceive him. . . . He who has no fear of God runs the risk of perishing and of being wholly lost. The fear of God makes man obey humbly and bow his head under the yoke of obedience, and the more he possesses of this fear, the more fervently does he worship. The gift of prayer is no small gift to him on whom it has been bestowed. Men's virtuous actions, how great soever I may deem them, are not reckoned or rewarded according to our scrutiny, but according to the good pleasure of God, for God regards not the quantity of the toil, but the quantity of the love and humility. Wherefore the safest course for us is ever to love and fear with humility, and never to trust in ourselves for any good thing, always regarding with suspicion thoughts that arise in the mind under a semblance of good.—*Fioretti* 241.

AGAINST MORBID ANXIETY

A CERTAIN brother once questioned brother Giles, saying: 'What am I to do? If I act well it makes me puffed up, if I act badly I fall into sadness and wellnigh into despair.' Brother Giles answered: 'Thou doest well if thou grievest for sin, but grieve moderately, and remember that God's power to have mercy is greater than thine to sin. For if a farmer were before sowing to consider within himself, saying, "If thou sowest now the birds of heaven and the beasts of the earth will come and eat up the grain," he never would sow, and consequently would have nothing to eat; but the judicious husbandman sows, and at length gathers what is sufficient for him. Forsake not, therefore, a good work by reason of vainglory; for if it displeases thee, a larger and better part shall always remain with thee at last.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 94.

S. FRANCIS' 'KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE'

'THESE,' said S. Francis, 'are my brethren, Knights of the Round Table, who lurk in deserts and remote places in order the more diligently to attend to prayer and meditation, bewailing their own and others' sins, living a life of simplicity and humility, whose holiness is known to God, and is sometimes unknown to their brethren and to other men. Their souls shall be presented by angels to God; then the Lord shall show them the fruit and reward of their labours—namely, the many souls that have been saved by their examples, their prayers, and their tears, and He shall say to them: "My beloved sons, behold these many souls that have been saved by your prayers, tears, and examples. Because ye have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. For others have preached and toiled with discourses of their own wisdom and learning, but I have wrought the fruit of salvation for your merits. Receive ye, therefore, the hire of their labours and the fruit of your own merits, which is the eternal kingdom that you have seized by the violence of your humility and simplicity, and of your prayers and tears." '—*Opusc.* 260; *S. P.* 72.

THE VISION OF BROTHER JOHN OF LA VERNA

WHEN Brother John of La Verna was once on the morrow of All Saints' Day saying Mass for all the souls of the departed (as the Church has ordained), he offered that sublime Sacrament (which for its efficacy the departed spirits long for above all other good things that may be done for them) with such affection of charity and such compassion that he seemed as though dissolved through sweetness of pity and brotherly love. Wherefore in that Mass, as he was devoutly elevating the Body of Christ and offering it to God the Father, and praying that for His Blessed Son Jesus Christ's sake, who had hung upon the cross to redeem souls, He would vouchsafe to deliver the souls of the departed by Him created and redeemed from the pains of Purgatory, immediately he saw countless souls coming forth from Purgatory like innumerable sparks issuing from a burning furnace, and he saw them rise to heaven through the merits of the Passion of Christ.—*Fioretti* 135.

PRAYER OR OBEDIENCE ?

A BROTHER was once at prayer in his cell, and his Warden sent to order him on his obedience to go for alms. The brother at once went to brother Giles, and said : 'My father, I was at prayer, and the Warden has ordered me to go for bread; but I think it would be better to remain at prayer.' Brother Giles answered : 'My son, knowest and understandest thou not yet what prayer is ? True prayer is to do the will of one's Superior, and it is a sign of great pride in one who has put his neck under the yoke of holy obedience if he sets obedience aside in order to do his own will, however he may think himself to be acting more perfectly. . . . I tell thee that if a man had such devotion and elevation of mindthat he might speak with the Angels, and while so engaged were called by his Superior, he ought forthwith to leave his converse with the Angels and obey his Superior.—*Fioretti 227*.

*THE Lord said to Adam : 'Eat of every tree of Paradise, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil eat not.' Adam might eat of every tree of Paradise, because so long as he did not violate obedience he sinned not. Now, that man eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil who makes his will his own, and exalts himself concerning those good things which the Lord speaks and works in him, and thus by the prompting of the Devil and transgression of the command it is become to him the fruit of the knowledge of evil. Wherefore he must needs suffer punishment.

*The Apostle saith : 'No one can say "the Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Ghost,' and 'There is none that doeth good, no not one.' Whosoever, therefore, is envious of his brother touching the good which God speaks and does in him is guilty of the sin of blasphemy, because he is envious against the Most High, the speaker and doer of everything that is good.—*Opusc.* 58, 64.

GOD'S FAVOURED SERVANT

ONE day the blessed father imparted to one of the brethren whom he greatly loved this word which he had at that time brought from the council-chamber (familiar to him) of the Divine Majesty: 'To-day there is on the earth a servant of God for whose sake as long as he shall live God will not allow famine to rage against men. . . .' All we who were witnesses of it know how quietly and peacefully the times passed during which the servant of Christ lived, and how they abounded in fruitfulness of all good things [spiritual and temporal]. . . . When he was removed all was changed; wars and rebellions prevailed everywhere. . . . A terrible famine spread far and wide, and its cruelty consumed very many. . . . A few days after his death S. Francis openly revealed to that same brother . . . that he was that servant of God. For one night, when that brother was sleeping, S. Francis called him with clear voice, saying: 'Brother, now is coming the famine which, so long as I was alive, God did not suffer to come on the earth.'—*2 Cel.* 52, 53.

THE DUTY OF PROMPT OBEDIENCE

'DEAREST brethren,' said S. Francis, 'obey the orders given you at once, and do not wait for them to be repeated, and do not pass judgment on an order, or allege that it is impossible to perform, for even were I to bid you do anything beyond your own strength, holy obedience will not want for strength. Nor ought you to consider who or what he is that gives you orders, but only that he is set over you. The Divine Compassion has deigned to grant me among other things this grace, that I would obey a novice of an hour's standing if he were given me as my Warden as diligently as I would obey the most senior and the discreetest of the brethren. The inferior ought not to consider in his Superior the man, but Him for whose sake he is in subjection, for the more contemptible the Superior, the more pleasing is the humility of him who obeys.'—*Opusc.* 238.

BROTHER JUNIPER'S GRIEF OVER HIS COMPANION'S DEATH

BROTHER JUNIPER had as his companion brother Attientialbene (Cleave-to-good), a man of the utmost obedience, patience, and virtue. For if one were to beat him all day long he would not utter a word of complaint. He was accordingly sometimes sent to convents where the communities were of forward conversation, and from them he bore much abuse most patiently. Furthermore, at a word from brother Juniper he would weep or laugh. But when Juniper heard that his companion was dead he was exceeding sorry, and cried: 'There is no good left me in the world;' and then, breaking all the utensils, he declared that the whole world was overthrown in that brother's death. 'Were it not that I should not be able to live with the brethren, and that they would not let me go, I would go straight to his grave, and take his skull, and divide it into two parts; of one I would make a dish to eat from, and of the other a cup to drink from.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 64.

BROTHER JUNIPER'S WALK TO ASSISI

BROTHER JUNIPER was once dwelling in the valley of Spoleto, and hearing that there was a great festival at Assisi, and that a great company of people were assembled there, he wished to go thither also; and on the day he stripped himself entirely naked, and, passing through Spello and two other places, walked through the middle of the city of Assisi, and came to the brethren. They were dismayed, and rebuked him, saying that he had put the Order to confusion. But the Minister-General called the brethren together, and after a stern reprimand said to Juniper: 'What penance can I assign thee which shall be worthy of such outrageous conduct?' 'I will tell thee, father,' answered Juniper. 'As I came hither naked, so let me return by the same way.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 63; *Fioretti* 218.

BROTHER GILES AND THE DOCTOR OF LAW

A DOCTOR of Law once came to brother Giles, who said to him: 'Believest thou that the gifts of God are great?' 'I believe so.' 'I will show thee,' said Giles, 'that thou dost not believe so;' adding, 'How much is thy property worth?' 'Perhaps a thousand pounds,' said the lawyer. 'Therefore what I said is true,' rejoined the holy man, 'for thou believest in word only. For if thou wert to sell thy property for a hundred thousand thou wouldst think the gain great, and yet thou wouldst not exchange it for the kingdom of heaven. Therefore heavenly things are counted as nothing by thee in comparison of earthly things.' 'Dost thou believe,' answered the lawyer, 'that anybody acts up to his belief?' 'If thou didst believe well thou wouldst act well, as the Saints have done.' Whereupon the lawyer allowed that Brother Giles' sentence was true.—*An. Fr.* iii. 94.

THE TRUE SERVANT OF GOD

'AH, brethren,' said S. Francis, 'how good it is to serve God! Better is it to serve God than to be lord of the world. But who is he that knows of a surety that he is a servant of God? Nothing is better than to be a servant of God, but nothing is more difficult for a man to know certainly than whether he is a servant or a friend of God. I confess to you that I asked the Lord that he would deign to show me when I am a servant of God, and when not, and the Lord Himself, of his exceeding kindness, deigned to give me this answer: "Know that thou art truly My servant when thou thinkest, speakest, and doest holy things." And I have intimated this to you that you also may know when you are God's servants and are pleasing Him, and in order that I may be ashamed before you when you shall see me fail in all or any of these things.'

WHAT A SINNER CANNOT DO

NO one ought to flatter himself with unjust applause for anything that a sinner can do. A sinner can fast, pray, weep, and afflict his flesh. This one thing alone he cannot do—be faithful to his Lord. We should therefore glory in this, to render to the Lord His glory, and, serving Him faithfully, to ascribe to Him whatsoever He gives.—*Opusc.* 252, 468.

LIVING SAINTS AND DEAD SAINTS

BROTHER MASSEO used sometimes to say in dissuasion of those who wanted to be gadding about on many pilgrimages : ' It is better to go to the living Saints than to the dead Saints —that is to say, to good men who are alive, rather than to visit the thresholds of the Saints. For the living Saints,' he added, ' will teach thee of the dangers they have passed through, and the temptations of the spirit and of the flesh that they have overcome.' He used often also to say : ' Where there is the greatest usefulness there is the greatest gain.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 121.

STORY OF BROTHER WILLIAM OF PERUGIA

THERE was in the convent at Perugia a brother, William by name, of very high birth, but lax in his words and deeds, so that he gave displeasure to the spiritual brethren. One day, when he was going to a fortress where a sister of his was living, he saw among a number of boys bathing in a river one carried away by the current and in danger of drowning. William plunged in forthwith to save the boy, but was himself carried away by the violence of the stream, and was drowned with the boy. And at about the same hour, as brother Giles, who was staying at Perugia, was washing his hands with the others (for it was dinner-time), he said to the brethren, with a smile: 'It is well with brother William, and it shall be still better with him.' The brethren did not know that he was dead, and soon after, when they heard that he had been drowned, fearing that he would be damned because he had been so lax, they prayed that the Lord would reveal his state to them. And it was said to one of them in the spirit that brother William was saved because of his charity in trying to rescue the boy, whereby they perceived why it was that brother Giles had said those words.—*An. Fr.* iii. 111.

[THE people of Greccio were suffering from a plague of wolves and from hailstorms which destroyed their crops]. One day, as S. Francis was preaching to them, he said: 'To the honour and praise of Almighty God, listen to the truth which I announce to you. If each one of you confesses his sins and brings forth worthy fruits of penitence, I pledge my word to you that this plague shall wholly depart, and that the Lord shall look upon you and multiply you in temporal goods. But hear this also: Again I announce to you that if ye shall be ungrateful for His benefits and return to your vomit, the plague shall be renewed, the punishment doubled, and greater wrath shall prevail against you.' And so it came to pass by the merits and prayers of the holy father, that the plague of wolves and the hail ceased from that hour. . . . And the people were multiplied exceedingly, and filled with temporal goods . . . but at length they forgot God who had saved them . . . and the fury of God was aroused against them ,and the evils that had departed returned, and there was added to them the sword of man; a pestilence ordained from heaven consumed many of the people, and at length the whole fortress was burnt up with avenging flames.—2 *Cel.* 35, 36.

A PARABLE OF BROTHER GILES

ONE of the brethren questioned brother Giles, saying: 'What could I do so that I might go willingly to prayer when I am feeling hard and undevout?' He answered: 'A king had two faithful servants, one of whom was armed, and the other unarmed. He sent them both to battle against his enemies. The armed man went forth bravely to battle, but the unarmed man said to his lord: "Lord, as thou seest, I have no arms, but for love of thee I will go forth to battle even without them." But when the king marked the faithfulness of that servant he said to his attendants: "Go, make ready arms wherewith this my faithful servant may be clad, and put upon him the ensign of my own arms." Even so, however listless, do thou go forth confidently to the battle of prayer, and the Lord will provide thee with what is needful.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 93.

REMEDIES AGAINST TEMPTATIONS OF THE FLESH

ONCE when brother Giles was with brother Rufino, brother Juniper, and brother Simon, he said to them: 'How do you deal with temptations of the flesh?' Brother Rufino answered: 'I commend myself to God and Blessed Mary, and throw myself on the ground.' 'I understand thee well,' said brother Giles. Then he put the question to brother Simon, who answered: 'I ponder on the shamefulness of the deeds of the flesh and escape.' And to him brother Giles said: 'I understand thee well. And thou, brother Juniper?' 'As soon as I feel such temptations I say, "Away, away, for the lodging is taken."' And brother Giles said: 'I hold with thee. For it is safest to fight with this vice by flight.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 89.

S. FRANCIS PRAYS FOR THE ABBOT OF S. GIUSTINO

THE Abbot of the monastery of S. Giustino, in the diocese of Perugia, happened once to meet S. Francis. Dismounting quickly from his horse, the Abbot talked with S. Francis for a short time concerning his soul's health, and then, as he was going away, humbly begged S. Francis to pray for him. 'I will gladly pray for thee, my lord,' answered S. Francis. And soon after parting from the Abbot he said to his companion: 'Wait a little, brother, for I wish to pay the debt which I have promised to discharge.' (For his custom always was when asked to pray for anyone not to put the matter aside, but to perform such promise quickly.) And so, as the holy man was praying, suddenly the Abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted warmth and a sweetness he had never experienced before, so that he seemed quite carried out of himself in rapture of mind. He stood still for awhile, and then, coming to himself again, he knew the power of holy Francis' prayer.—*2 Cel.* 101.

NO REWARD WITHOUT SERVICE

A CERTAIN brother once told brother Giles that the brethren made him work so hard that he could scarce attend to prayer, and therefore he asked to be ordered to go to some hermitage where he might serve God in greater quietness. Brother Giles said to him: 'If thou wert to go to the King of France and ask him to give thee a thousand marks of silver, would he not answer, "Fool! what hast thou done for me that I should give thee a thousand marks of silver?" But if thou hadst first done him a great service thou mightest boldly demand a reward. If, therefore, thou wilt make a demand thou must work first; moreover, it is a greater virtue to do one thing at another's will than two at one's own.' —*An. Fr.* iii. 86.

A CERTAIN nobleman once asked brother Giles why S. John, since he was holy even from the womb, went into the wilderness, and there practised such strict penitence as the Gospel testifies. 'Tell me,' answered brother Giles, 'why fresh meat is salted when it is still so good?' 'The better to keep it,' at once replied the other. Then the holy man said: 'Even so S. John was seasoned with the salt of penitence that his holiness might be the longer preserved.' By the which answer the nobleman was greatly edified.

Brother Giles once rebuked a brother who was worthy of rebuke. That brother was angry, and did not bear the rebuke patiently. The next night there stood by him in a vision one who said: 'Be not angry, brother, for blessed shall he be who shall believe Brother Giles.' Whereupon the brother arose betimes, went to brother Giles, humbly begged pardon for his anger, and begged him often to rebuke him, for that he was ever ready to bear his rebukes patiently.—*An. Fr.* iii. 109, 95.

BROTHER GILES LOSES HIS TEMPER

WHEN brother Giles abode at the convent of Cetona he made a little garden in which he planted some very fine cabbages. One day when he was in the garden with a stick in his hand saying the Lord's Prayer, one of the brethren (perchance to try him) came with a great sword, and began to cut the cabbages to pieces. At this sight brother Giles rose up against him with hasty words, reproached him, and drove him even by force out of the garden. 'O brother Giles,' said the other, 'where are thy patience and sanctity now?' Brother Giles sighed, and answered: 'O my brother, forgive me, for thou didst come against me suddenly, and I was not armed, and could not guard myself in time.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 108.

A HARD SAYING OF BROTHER GILES

TWO brethren of the Preachers once came to visit brother Giles at Cetona, and as they were talking together of God, one of the Preachers said: 'Reverend father, S. John the Evangelist has spoken things exceeding high and deep about God.' 'Dearest brother,' said Giles, 'S. John says naught about God.' 'Beware, dearest father,' said the other; 'what is this thou art saying? . . .' 'I tell you again and again,' said Giles, 'that S. John says naught about God. [The Preachers withdrew, scandalized, but brother Giles called them back], and pointed to the mountain above the convent of Cetona, saying: 'Imagine a mountain of millet seed as big as that, and at the foot a sparrow to eat of it. By how much would the sparrow lessen it in a day, a month, or a year, or how much would it take in a hundred years?' 'It would hardly lessen it in a thousand years,' answered the Preachers. 'Then,' said Brother Giles, 'so boundless is the everlasting Godhead, and so great a mountain, that S. John, who was as a sparrow, says naught in respect of the greatness of God.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 109.

BROTHER MASSEO'S DEVOTION

BROTHER MASSEO was a man of much prayer and many tears, as some of the brethren found who used stealthily to watch him by day and by night. Once a day only did he eat, and that in the evening, and then he entered his cell and slept a little. About midnight he always awoke, and, praying with fervour, would say these words all through the night: 'My Lord Jesu Christ, give me contrition for my sins, and give me grace to amend and to make satisfaction according to Thy will;' nor did he cease to say these words unless he were overpowered by weeping. In the morning, after hearing Mass, he would retire to his cell, and chant in plain-song: 'O Lord my God, make me to know Thee, to fear Thee, and to 'ove Thee with all my heart.'—*An. Fr.* iii. 119.

A SCRUPULOUS CONSCIENCE RELIEVED

A CERTAIN spiritual brother of long standing in the Order was afflicted by sore tribulation of the flesh, and seemed sunk in the depth of despair. And his grief was doubled daily, for his conscience, which was more tender than discerning, drove him to make confession about nothing; for one is bound diligently to confess, not the fact of being tempted, but the having yielded to temptation, even if but a little. But this brother was so shy that he feared to disclose the whole (which amounted to nothing) to one priest, and so he divided his cogitations, and imparted some to one and others to others. One day when he was walking with S. Francis the latter said to him: 'Brother, I tell thee that thou art not bound to confess thy tribulation any more to anyone, and fear not, because that which besets thee without thy yielding to it shall redound to thy glory, not to thy guilt. And as often as thou shalt be troubled say the Lord's Prayer seven times on my authority.' The brother marvelled how the holy man knew of his trouble, and was filled with the utmost joy, and before long escaped from all tribulation.—*2 Cel.* 124.

OF SPIRITUAL JOY

S. FRANCIS held that the surest remedy against the thousand wiles of the foe was spiritual joy. For he used to say: 'The Devil most exults when he can filch from the servant of God his joy of spirit. He carries dust that he may cast it into the conscience through even the smallest chinks, and defile the candour of the mind and the purity of the life; but when spiritual joy fills the heart, in vain does the serpent shed his deadly poison. Devils cannot hurt Christ's servant when they see him filled with holy mirth.' He strove, therefore, ever to be gladsome of heart, and to maintain the unction of the Spirit and the oil of joy. He avoided with the utmost care the wretched malady of spiritual sloth, so that if he felt it stealing ever so little into his mind he flew immediately to prayer, for he said: 'When God's servant is (as often happens) disturbed about anything, he ought forthwith to arise and pray, and remain persistently in his heavenly Father's presence until He restores to him the joy of His salvation. For if he tarries in gloom that Babylonian stuff will increase, and, unless it be at length purged out by tears, will produce abiding rust in the heart.'—2 *Cel.* 125.

S. FRANCIS' HATRED OF SLANDERERS

S. FRANCIS hated slanderers above all other kinds of wicked men. He said that they carry poison on their tongues, and taint others therewith. Tale-bearers, therefore, as biting fleas, he avoided, and (as we have ourselves seen) turned away his ears when they were speaking, that they might not be defiled by hearing such things. Once, on hearing a brother slandering another, S. Francis turned to brother Peter dei Cattani, his vicar, and spoke these terrible words: 'There is instant danger to the Order unless slanderers are put down. The sweet savour of many will soon stink unless the mouths of the stinking ones be stopped. Arise quickly, examine carefully, and if thou find the accused brother innocent, punish the accuser so severely as to render him a marked man. Hand him over to the Florentine bruiser if thou canst not punish him thyself.' (He used to call brother John of Florence, a man of great stature and strength, the 'bruiser.') 'Do thou and all the ministers give the utmost heed that this pestilent disease spread no further.'—2 *Cel.* 182.

S. FRANCIS' CARE TO AVOID HYPOCRISY

ONCE, during the forty days' fast known as S. Martin's Lent, Francis had eaten food seasoned with lard, on account of his infirmities, which did not allow him to take oil. At the end of the fast he was preaching to a large concourse of people, and his first words were these: 'You believe that I am a holy man, and that is why you have come to me with great devotion. But I confess to you that during all this fast I have been eating food seasoned with lard.' Even so he often ascribed to self-indulgence what had been a concession to his infirmity. With the like fervour he would, if ever his spirit were moved to vainglory, at once reveal it before all men by open confession. Once, when walking through Assisi, an old woman came up to him asking alms for the love of God. Having nothing but the cloak on his back, he forthwith gave her that, but immediately afterwards confessed to all the bystanders that he had felt some vainglory at his action.—*S. P.* 62, 63; *2 Cel.* 131, 132.

SPIRITUAL JOY TO BE STRIVEN FOR

DO ye, dearest brethren, have the holy joy of God both within and without, for if the servant of God strives to have and to keep the spiritual joy which comes from purity of heart and is won by devout prayer, the devils can do him no harm, for they say: 'Since the servant of God has joy both in trouble and in prosperity, we can find no entrance into him, nor can we hurt him.' But the devils exult when they can quench or in any measure hinder the devotion and joy that come from pure supplication and other virtuous deeds. . . . Therefore, dearest brethren, since this spiritual joy arises from cleanness of heart and purity of prayer, our principal effort should be to attain to these two things, in order that you may have both within and without that joy which with the utmost affection I long for and love to see and to feel in myself and in you, to the edification of our neighbour and the reproach of the foe; for he and his members must needs be sorry, but we must ever be glad, and rejoice in the Lord.—*Opusc.* 250.

S. FRANCIS' REGARD FOR BROTHER FIRE

WHILE S. Francis was keeping his fast of forty days on the mountain of La Verna, his companion one day, at the time for eating, lighted a fire in the cell where he was wont to eat; and when he had done so he went to fetch S. Francis from another cell, where he was praying, and took with him a missal in order that he might read him the gospel of the day; for S. Francis always desired before eating to hear the gospel which was read on the day at Mass, when he was unable to hear Mass. When S. Francis was come to the cell to eat, the cell was on fire, and the flame had reached the roof. His companion began to do his best to put the fire out, but could not do it by himself. S. Francis would not help him, but took a skin which he kept over him at night, and went out with it into the wood. The brethren in that place, who lodged a long way from that cell, hastened thither as soon as they heard that it was burning, and put the fire out. Afterwards S. Francis returned to eat, and when he had eaten he said to his companion: 'I will not have that skin over me any more, because through my greed I would not let brother fire consume it.'—*S. P.* 117.

HOW S. FRANCIS CLOTHED THE POOR IN WINTER

FRANCIS, the poor man, the father of the poor, making himself like unto the poor in all things, used to be distressed to see anyone poorer than himself, not because he coveted vain renown, but only from a feeling of sympathy; and though he was content with a very common and rough tunic, he often longed to share it with some poor man. But in order that this richest of poor men might (in whatsoever way) help the poor, he would in very cold weather ask the rich of this world to lend him a mantle or furs. When in their devotion they complied with his request even more readily than he had made it, he would say to them: 'I will take this from you on the understanding that you do not expect to have it back any more;' and then with joy and exultation he would clothe the first poor man he met with whatever had been given him. He was very much distressed if he saw any poor man harshly spoken to, or if he heard anyone curse any creature.—1 *Cel.* 76.

S. FRANCIS' KINDNESS TO THE POOR

IT happened once that a certain brother had given a sharp answer to a poor man who had asked alms, for he had said to him : 'See to it, for perhaps thou art a rich man feigning poverty.' When holy Francis, the father of the poor, heard it, he was deeply grieved, and sharply rebuked the brother who had spoken thus, and ordered him to strip himself before the poor man, kiss his feet, and beg his pardon. For he used to say : 'He who reviles the poor does a wrong to Christ, for the poor man bears the noble ensign of Christ, who made Himself poor in this world for us.' Often, therefore, when he found poor people laden with wood or other burdens, he would help them by giving the support of his own shoulders, even though he was very weak. He overflowed with the spirit of charity, pitying not only men who were suffering need, but even the dumb brutes, reptiles, birds, and other creatures with and without sensation.—1 *Cel.* 76, 77.

IT happened once that Francis in a severe illness relaxed a little of the rigour of his abstinence in order to recover his health. When he had regained somewhat of his bodily strength he said: 'It is not meet that people should believe me to be abstinent when, on the contrary, my flesh is being refreshed in secret.' And so, aflame with the spirit of holy humility, he arose and called the people together in the Piazza of Assisi, with many of the brethren whom he had brought with him, and went into the principal church, where, with a cord tied to his neck and naked save for his drawers, in the sight of all he ordered himself to be dragged to the stone whereon malefactors were wont to be placed for punishment; and sitting down on it, though he was weak from quartan fever and it was a time of bitter cold, he preached with great fervour, and declared in the hearing of all that he was not to be honoured as spiritual, but rather to be despised by all as carnal and gluttonous. But the hearers smote upon their breasts, and said: 'If this holy man is accusing himself, and putting his body to such shame for his conduct in a case of manifest necessity, what shall we do who all our lives have lived, and are still living, according to the desires of the flesh?'—*Bonaventura* vi. 2; *S. P.* 61.

PRECEPTS OF BROTHER GILES

IF any man should praise thee, speaking well of thee, return that praise to God alone; and if any man speaks ill of thee, or reviles thee, do thou reinforce him, speaking as ill, and worse, of thyself. If thou wilt make thine own case good, ever strive to make it bad, and make thy companion's case good, always blaming thyself, and always praising, or at least excusing, thy neighbour. When anyone will contend or go to law with thee, if thou wilt win, lose, and thou shalt win; for if thou wouldst go to law in order to win, then, when thou thoughtest to have won, thou wouldst find that thou hadst utterly lost. And therefore, my brother, believe me of a surety that the straight way of salvation is the way of loss.—*Fioretti* 242.

BROTHER MONALDO'S VISION OF S. FRANCIS

[AT a certain chapter of the brethren held in Provence, a brother named Monaldo, a priest conspicuous by his virtue, was present.] Brother Antony was also present, whose mind the Lord opened, so that he might understand the Scriptures, and utter among all the people words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb concerning Jesus. While he was most earnestly and devoutly preaching to the brethren on the text, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,' brother Monaldo looked toward the door of the house wherein the brethren were assembled, and there saw with his bodily eyes blessed Francis raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as on a cross, blessing the brethren. All who were present seemed to be filled with the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the saving joy which they experienced availed to render credible to them what they were told concerning the sight and presence of their glorious father.—1 *Cel.* 48.

THE PRIVILEGES OF HOLY POVERTY

AMONG the other illustrious and chiefest virtues which make ready in man an abiding-place for God, and point out the best and shortest way of approaching and attaining to Him, holy Poverty is privileged above all, and by singular favour her title excels those of the others; for she is the foundation and guard of all the virtues, and among the virtues of the Gospel is in place and name deservedly supreme. For the other virtues, if established on this foundation, have nothing to fear from the rain descending, the floods coming, and the winds blowing, threatening destruction. And rightly so, since the Son of God, the Lord of the virtues, loved Poverty with special affection, sought her out and found her, as He wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. Her at the beginning of His preaching did He set as a light of the faith to those entering port, and her did He first lay as the foundation-stone of His house. On her is bestowed without any delay the kingdom of heaven, which the other virtues have from Him by promise [only]. 'Blessed,' says He, 'are ye poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.'—*S. C.* 1.

S. FRANCIS EXHORTS HIS COMPANIONS TO SEEK THE LADY POVERTY'S ABODE

AND Francis said to his brethren : 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the dwelling of the Lady Poverty, that she may teach us her ways, and that we may walk in her paths.' But as they were looking round on all sides to see how they could go up the mountain, for it was exceeding high and steep, some of them began to talk together, saying : 'Who shall ascend this mountain ? and who shall attain to its summit ?' But Francis, understanding this, said to them : 'Narrow is the way, my brothers, and strait is the gate, that leadeth unto life, and few there are who find it. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, for every hard thing shall be easy to us. Lay down the burdens of your own will, cast away the loads of your sins, and gird you as strong men. Forget the things that are behind, and reach forward with all your might to the things that are before you. I tell you that every place on which you tread shall be yours. For there is a Spirit before our face, Christ the Lord, who shall draw us to the mountain-tops in the bonds of love. Wondrous, my brothers, are the espousals of Poverty, but we may easily enjoy her embraces, for the Lady of the Nations is become, as it were, a widow, and the Queen of all the virtues has been made vile and contemptible.'—*S. C.* 3.

OF THE HOUSE AT PORTIUNCULA WHICH S. FRANCIS BEGAN TO DESTROY

S. FRANCIS, when speaking of poverty, would often urge on the brethren that saying of the Gospel: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of God hath not where to lay His head.' Once, when a chapter was to be held at S. Maria de Portiuncula, and the time was at hand, the people of Assisi, in Francis' absence, and without his knowledge, built with the utmost speed a house for the chapter to be held in. On his return he saw the house, and, being deeply displeased, complained in no gentle tones. Presently he arose, the foremost to demolish the building, got up on the roof, and with strong hand tore down the slates and tiles. He bade the brethren also come up and remove that monstrous thing, opposed to poverty, for he said that anything savouring of arrogance that was seen in that place would quickly spread through the Order, and be taken by all as an example. Therefore, he would have utterly destroyed that house if certain knights who were present had not resisted the fervour of his spirit by declaring that it was the property of the State, and not of the brethren.—2 *Ccl.* 56, 57.

OF THE MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE BRETHREN AND THE WORLD

S. FRANCIS would sometimes repeat these words: 'In proportion as the brethren shall decline from poverty the world shall decline from them, and they shall seek, but shall not find; but if they embrace my Lady Poverty, the world shall nourish them, because they have been given to the world for salvation.' And again: 'There are mutual obligations between the world and the brethren; they owe to the world a good example, the world owes them the provision of necessaries. When they belie their faith, and cease to give a good example, the world, by a just judgment, draws back its hand from them.' In his care for Poverty the man of God feared a multitude; for appearance, even though not fact, points it out as rich. Wherefore he used to say: 'O that it *might* come to pass that the world, beholding the Lesser Brethren very rarely, should wonder at the fewness of them! . . .' Those psalms which refer to poverty—for instance, 'The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever,' and 'Let the poor see and be glad'—he used to chant with more fervent affection and more gladsome rejoicing.—2 *Cel.* 70.

BROTHER GILES KINDLES BROTHER LEO'S ZEAL FOR POVERTY

NOW brother Giles was very zealous for Poverty, for he dwelt in a little cell made of wattle and clay, was content with a single poor tunic, and abhorred all superfluity. So when he heard from brother Leo and other brethren that a great and sumptuous basilica was building at Assisi, and that a marble receptacle had been placed there by brother Elias, into which visitors might put money for that work, he answered: 'Though a house stretched from here (Perugia) to Assisi, one corner is enough for me to live in.' Then he turned to brother Leo, and said with tears: 'If thou art dead, go and break that marble vessel which has been ordained to receive the money of contributors, contrary to holy Poverty. If thou art alive, let it alone; for thou couldst hardly bear the persecutions of yonder Elias.' When brother Leo understood this he was strengthened in the Lord, and he and some other brethren broke that vessel to pieces. Wherefore brother Elias was indignant, and caused them to be severely flogged and driven out of the city.—*An. Fr.* iii. 34, 72, 89.

HOW LEARNED MEN SHOULD STRIP THEMSELVES ON ENTERING THE ORDER

S. FRANCIS once said that when a great clerk joined the Order he ought in some sort to resign even his learning, in order that, having stript himself of such a possession, he might offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. 'Learning,' he said, 'makes many men indocile, not suffering a certain stiffness of theirs to be bent by the discipline of humility. Wherefore I would have a lettered man first of all make this petition to me: "See, brother, I have lived long in the world, and have never truly known my God. Give me, I pray thee, a place removed from the turmoil of the world where I may grieve over my past years, and where, gathering together the scattered energies of my heart, I may reform my soul for better things." What, think you, would the man become who should make such a beginning? Verily he would go forth to all things with the strength of a lion unchained, and the blessed juice which he had tasted at the beginning would increase in him with continual profit.'—2 *Cel.* 194.

AGAINST PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE PULPIT

THERE was once in England a brother whose sermons were in much acceptance, and who displayed no little ingenuity in weaving a certain amount of philosophy into his theology. One night when he was preparing to preach, intending to philosophize in that sermon beyond his wont, Christ appeared to him as he was praying, holding a beautiful book in His hand, in the middle of which were fair golden letters, but on the margins there was mire which gave off a grievous stench ; the outward surface of the book was also foul. And when the brother asked Christ what that book so foul and fair represented, He answered : ' The golden letters are the words of theological truth, the stinking mire the sayings of philosophers, the outward foulness the show of ingenuity whereby ye defile My words in many ways.' And so that brother, on coming back to himself, changed his subject, laid aside his ingenuity, and, content with the utterances of Holy Scripture and the holy doctors alone, renounced philosophic learning in his sermons.—*An. Fr.* iii. 288.

SAYINGS OF BROTHER WILLIAM OF NOTTINGHAM

BROTHER WILLIAM of Nottingham used to say that regard must be had to the mind and intention of S. Francis in the Rule, lest, even as the hairs of the beard grow insensibly, so superfluities should grow up in the Order. Further, that we must struggle more than is absolutely necessary against the current of the world, else it will draw us lower down than we intend, just as a stream does to those who are crossing it, and making straight for the opposite shore; and that no one can tell whether he will dislike being removed from any place until he has tried it, any more than we notice that hairs stick to the head until they are pulled. . . . He believed anyone's report very reluctantly unless the person were willing to make his statement in the presence of several others.—*Eccleston, Coll.* xiv.

*BLESSED is the servant who renders and attributes all his good things to the Lord God, for he who keeps back anything for himself hides the money of the Lord his God, and that which he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.

*Blessed is that servant who does not deem himself better when he is magnified and exalted by men than when he is deemed of no account, simple, and an object of contempt; for a man is just so great as he is in the sight of God, and no greater. Woe to that Religious who has been set on high by others, and will not come down of his own will; and blessed is that servant who is not set on high of his own will, and ever desires to be under the feet of others.

*Blessed is that Religious who has no joy and gladness save in the most holy words and works of God, and thereby leads men to the love of God in joy, gladness, and exultation; and woe to that Religious who delights in vain and idle words, and thereby leads men to laughter.—*Opusc.* 70, 72.

VIRTUE TO BE PREFERRED TO LEARNING

THOSE brethren who are being led by curiosity of learning shall find their hands empty in the day of tribulation. Therefore I would rather have them strengthened in virtue, that when the time of tribulation comes they might have the Lord with them in their distress; for tribulation is coming, when books shall profit nothing, and be thrown out of windows or hidden away. I would not have my brethren eager for learning and books, but I would have them be founded on holy humility, and imitate pure simplicity, holy prayer, and the Lady Poverty. This is the only safe way to save themselves and edify others, for Christ, whom the brethren have been called to imitate, pointed out to us this way alone, and taught it alike by word and example. Many brethren, with a view to edifying others, will forsake their calling—namely, holy humility, pure simplicity, prayer, devotion, and our Lady Poverty. And it shall happen to them that the understanding of Scripture, which they think will make them the more imbued or filled with devotion, inflamed by love, and enlightened by the knowledge of God, shall be the occasion of their remaining cold and empty within; and so they will not be able to return to their old vocation, because they have wasted in vain and false study the time for living after their vocation.—*Opusc.* 256.

OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE

ONCE when S. Francis was sitting with his companions he sighed forth some such lament as this: 'There is scarce any Religious in all the world that obeys his Superior perfectly.' His companions, much moved, said to him: 'Tell us, father, what perfect and supreme obedience is.' He answered: 'Take a corpse, and put it where you please; you will see that it does not resist being moved, grumbles not at its position, asks not for release. If it be placed on a throne it will look, not above, but beneath; if arrayed in purple its pallor will be doubled. This,' he added, 'is the truly obedient man; he discusses not wherefore he is moved, cares not where he is placed, does not press to be transferred elsewhither. When raised to office, he keeps his wonted humility; the more he is honoured, the more unworthy he deems himself to be.'—*2 Cel.* 152.

S. FRANCIS EXHORTS THE BRETHREN TO REVERENCE THE WORDS OF GOD, AND CONFESSES HIS OWN SHORTCOMINGS

* FORASMUCH as 'he who is of God heareth God's words,' we, my loving brethren, who are appointed in a more special manner to divine duties, must not only hear and do what God says, but must also (in order that we may be penetrated with a sense of the height of our Creator and of our subjection to Him) protect the vessels and other receptacles which contain His holy words. Wherefore I admonish all my brethren and encourage them in Christ to revere the words of God to the best of their power wheresoever they find them written, and, so far as they may, to collect them and put them away if they are not kept in a proper place, or are lying scattered anywhere in an unseemly way, honouring in the words the Lord who spoke them. For many things are hallowed by the words of God, and it is by the power of Christ's words that the Sacrament of the altar is accomplished. Furthermore, I confess all my sins to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to the Blessed Mary ever virgin, and to all the Saints in heaven and in earth, and to the Minister-General of this our Religion (as to my venerable lord), and to all the priests of our Order, and to all other my blessed brethren. In many things I have offended by my grievous fault, especially in that I have not kept the Rule which I promised to the Lord, nor said the office, as the Rule prescribes, whether through negligence or by occasion of my infirmity, or because I am ignorant and unlettered.—*Epist.* xi. (*Opusc.* 32).

S. FRANCIS ENTREATS THAT THE RULE BE OBSERVED

* I ENTREAT my Minister-General as earnestly as I can to cause the Rule to be observed by all, and let the clerks say the office devoutly before God, so that they may please God by their singleness of mind, and not tickle the ears of the people by wantonness of voice. Let them not heed melody of voice, but harmony of mind, so that the voice may be in concord with the mind, and the mind with God. I for my part promise steadfastly to keep these things, as God shall give me grace. . . . But if any of the brethren will not observe these things, I hold them not for Catholics nor for my brethren. I will neither see them nor speak to them until they shall have done penance. And this I say of all others who go wandering about setting aside the discipline of the Rule; for our Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life that He might not break His obedience to the most holy Father.—*Epist.* xi. (*Opusc.* 34).

EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHREN TO REVERENCE THE HOLY SACRAMENT.—I.

*HEAR ye, children of the Lord and my brethren, and receive with your ears my words. Incline the ears of your heart, and obey the voice of the Son of God. Keep His commandments with your whole heart, and fulfil His counsels with perfect mind. Give praise to Him, for He is good, and exalt Him in your works. The Lord God offers Himself to us as to His children. I therefore entreat all you brethren, with kissing of your feet and with that charity which I am capable of, that to the uttermost of your power you show all reverence and all honour to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the things that are in heaven and that are on earth have been reconciled to Almighty God, and made to be at peace with Him. I also beseech in the Lord all my brethren who are and shall be and desire to be priests of the Most High, whensoever they wish to celebrate Mass, to be pure and to perform with purity and reverence the true Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with holy and undefiled intention—not for any worldly object, not for fear or love of any man, as though they were men-pleasers, but let the whole will (in so far as the grace of the Almighty gives help thereto) be directed to Him. And desire to please Him, the supreme God, alone, for He alone it is who works therein as pleases Him.—*Epist.* xii. (*Opusc.* 36).

EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHREN TO REVERENCE THE HOLY SACRAMENT—II.

*REMEMBER, my brother priests, that it was written in Moses' law that those who transgressed even in corporal matters died without any mercy by the sentence of the Lord. How much greater and severer punishment does he deserve to undergo who shall have trodden under foot the Son of God, and held the blood of the testament, wherein he was sanctified, a polluted thing, and done despite to the Holy Ghost? For a man that is polluted despises and treads under foot the Lamb of God, since, as saith the Apostle, he who, not discerning and distinguishing between the holy bread of Christ and other foods, or other unworthy deeds, eats unworthily; for that the Lord saith by the Prophet: 'Cursed is the man who does the Lord's work negligently or fraudulently.' And, by reason of the priests who will not apply their hearts to this in truth, God condemns us, saying: 'I will curse your blessings. . . .' Let every man be abashed, let the whole world tremble, and let heaven exult whensoever Christ the Son of the living God is upon the altar in the hands of the priest. O wondrous height, O astounding condescension, O sublime humility, that the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, should so humble Himself as to hide Himself for our salvation beneath the lowly form of bread. Behold, my brethren, the humility of God, pour out your hearts before Him, and humble yourselves that ye may also be exalted by Him.—*Epist.* xii. (*Opusc.* 38).

S. FRANCIS AND THE APOSTATE BROTHER

WHEN S. Francis was passing through Apulia he met a man who had apostatized from his Order. The man fell at his feet, and humbly begged forgiveness for his apostasy. Then the holy father pointed to a gallows standing on an eminence in front of them, and said: 'I pardon thee this offence now; return to the Order, but beware; for if thou reject the habit a second time, or leave the Order, thou shalt be hanged on that gallows.' The apostate returned to the Order, but remained therein but a short time, and a few days after bidding it farewell he committed some crime, for which, according to the holy man's prophecy, he came to a wretched and shameful end on the gallows.—*Opusc.* 420.

HOW BROTHER GILES FORETOLD THAT HE WOULD NOT BE CANONIZED

WHEN brother Giles was in his last sickness, and so grievously afflicted by fever, cough, and pains in head and chest that he could neither eat nor sleep, and the brethren had to carry him about on a bed trying if he might find any rest, the people of Perugia sent many armed men to guard him, fearing that after his death he might be carried elsewhither, especially because he had a great wish to be buried in S. Maria degli Angeli [by Assisi]. But when the holy man heard of it, he said in fervour of spirit: 'Tell the Perugians that the bells shall never be rung for my canonization, nor for great miracles [wrought by me]; no sign shall be given [them] but the sign of Jonah.' On hearing this, they answered: 'Though he be not canonized, we will have him.' —*An. Fr.* iii. 113.

S. FRANCIS FORETELLS A TIME OF TRIBULATION

S. FRANCIS used to say: 'The time will come when through the evil examples of evil brethren this Religion, beloved of God, shall be so ill spoken of that it shall be ashamed to show itself in public. . . . But those who in that time shall have been found approved shall be better than their predecessors. But woe to those who, applauding themselves on account of the mere show and appearance of religious conversation, and trusting in their own wisdom and learning, shall be found idle—that is, not exercising themselves in works of virtue, in the way of the Cross and of repentance, and in the pure observance of the Gospel, which they are bound by their profession to observe purely and simply. For these will not steadfastly resist the temptations which shall be allowed to come for the trial of the elect; but they who shall have been tried and approved shall receive the crown of life for the attainment of which they are exercised meanwhile by the wickedness of the reprobate.—*S. P.* 70.

THE BRETHREN MUST HAVE NO DWELLING OF THEIR OWN

ONCE when S. Francis was returning from Verona, and was intending to go through Bologna, he was told 'that a house of the brethren had just been built there.' No sooner did he hear the words 'a house of the brethren' than he turned aside and went elsewhere without going to Bologna, giving orders that all the brethren were to leave the house with haste, in consequence of which even the sick were not left behind, but turned out with the rest. Nor were they allowed to go back until the Lord Hugh (then Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy) had made it publicly known that the house belonged to him.—2 *Cel.* 58 ; *S. P.* 6.

HE would not let the brethren live in any dwelling, even a small one, unless he were sure of there being some owner to whom the property belonged, for he always aimed at his sons' observing the laws of pilgrims—namely, to be gathered under another's roof, to pass onward peaceably, and to thirst after their native land. So even in the hermitage of Sartiano, when one brother asked another where he was coming from, and the answer was 'From brother Francis' cell,' the holy man, on hearing it, replied : 'Since thou hast appropriated the cell to me by putting Francis' name to it, look out for another tenant for it, for I will not stay in it any more.'—2 Cel. 59.

S. FRANCIS FORETELLS THE FORSAKING OF POVERTY BY THE BRETHREN

BROTHER LEO, the blessed father's companion and confessor, on seeing several large and sumptuous buildings being reared, which bore little testimony to the strict poverty of the Lesser Brethren, desired greatly to know the father's will and opinion in this matter, and spoke to him about it in the presence of other brethren. S. Francis said these words in reply: 'Hearken, my brethren: some of our Order are now building many great convents, and after us there will come other brethren of ours who will build great houses, wherein nobles of the world may dwell honourably; and these brethren shall make for themselves very good tunics. But it is enough for me now if my brethren keep themselves from mortal sins.'—*Opusc.* 372.

HOW S. FRANCIS CLOTHED A POOR WOMAN AT CELANO

IT happened at Celano in winter-time that S. Francis was wearing a cloth folded like a mantle, which a friend of the brethren, a man of Tivoli, had lent him ; and when he was in the palace of the Bishop of Marsi he met an old woman asking alms. Immediately he unfastened the cloth, and though it did not belong to him, gave it to the poor old woman, saying : 'Go and make thyself a gown, for thou art in sore need of one.' The old woman smiled, being quite overcome either by shyness or joy, took the cloth from his hands, hurried off, and, fearing that it might be asked for again if she delayed, cut it up with scissors. But finding that the cloth she had cut would not be enough for a gown, she was encouraged by his former kindness to go back to the holy man and point out that there was too little cloth. Francis looked round at his companion, who had just the amount of cloth required on his back, and said : 'Hearest thou, brother, what this poor woman is saying ? Let us bear the cold for the love of God, and do thou give her cloth to finish her gown with.' Whereupon his companion gave, even as he had given, and both remained naked that the old woman might be clothed.—2 *Cel.* 86.

S. FRANCIS' CARE FOR THE BIRDS AND BEASTS AT CHRISTMAS

S. FRANCIS was often heard to say: 'If I can have speech of the Emperor, to entreat and persuade him, I will ask that for the love of God and of me he will make a special law that no one should take or kill our sisters the larks, nor do them any harm; and likewise that all the magistrates of cities and lords of fortresses and villages should be bound every year on Christmas Day to compel men to throw out corn and other grain on the roads outside the cities and fortresses, that our sisters the larks and the other birds, too, may have somewhat to eat on the day of so great a festival; and that for reverence to the Son of God, whom, as on that night the most blessed Virgin Mary laid in a manger between the ox and the ass, everyone who has an ox and an ass should be bound that night to provide them abundantly with good fodder; and likewise that on that day all the poor should be satisfied by the rich with good food.'—*S. P.* 114.

S. FRANCIS' CHRISTMAS AT GRECCIO

THERE dwelt at Greccio a man named John, whom Francis loved with special affection, because, having been a man of noble and honourable position in his town, he had trampled on the nobility of the flesh, and followed after the nobility of the mind. This man did blessed Francis send for about fifteen days before the Nativity of the Lord, and said to him: 'If thou wilt that we celebrate the present festival of the Lord at Greccio, make haste and diligently prepare what I tell thee. For I would make memorial of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes His infant hardships: how He lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by.' When the good and faithful man heard it, he made haste and prepared in the aforesaid place all the things that Francis had told him of. . . . The holy man came, found all things ready, and rejoiced. The manger was prepared, with the hay; the ox and the ass had been brought in. The people came together, the brethren sang praises to God. The Saint of God stood before the manger, full of sighs, overcome with pity, and filled with wondrous joy. The solemnities of Mass were celebrated over the manger . . . and the holy man of God with sonorous voice chanted the Gospel, and then preached to the people who stood around, uttering words sweet as honey concerning the birth of the poor King and the little town of Bethlehem.—1 *Cel.* 84, 85.

S. FRANCIS' LOVE FOR THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

S. FRANCIS observed with ineffable eagerness the Nativity of the child Jesus above all other festivals, declaring that it was the feast of feasts, whereon God, become a tiny infant, hung upon a human breast. He cherished with hungry thoughts the image of those infant limbs, and his compassion for the Child, which flooded his heart, made him even lisp words of sweetness, as infants do. When there was a talk of not eating flesh, because it was a Friday, he answered brother Morico, saying: 'Thou sinnest, brother, in calling the day on which a Child has been born to us Friday. I would,' said he, 'that the very walls should eat flesh on such a day, or, if they cannot, that they should at any rate be greased outside!' —2 *Cel.* 199.

S. FRANCIS INSISTS ON THE BRETHREN WORKING

THE blessed Francis used to say that those who did not apply themselves with willing humility to some work should soon be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. No one could appear before him idle without being at once checked by a sharp reproof. For he, the pattern of all perfection, used himself humbly to work with his hands, and did not allow any part of that best of gifts, time, to run to waste. For he used to say: 'I wish my brethren to labour and humbly train themselves in good works, that we may be the less burdensome to men, and that neither our heart nor our tongue may go astray in idleness. But let those who know nothing learn to work.' He said, however, that what was gained or earned by work should not be at the disposal of the worker, but of the Warden or of the family.—*S. P.* 75.

SAYINGS OF BROTHER GILES

BROTHER GILES once said: 'A certain man had neither eyes, hands, nor feet. Someone asked him: "If anyone gave thee back thy feet, what wouldst thou give him?" "A hundred pounds," he answered. "And if anyone gave thee back thy hands?" "All my goods," was his reply. "And if anyone gave thee light?" "I would serve him all the days of my life."' And brother Giles said: 'Behold, dear brother, the Lord has given thee hands, eyes, and feet, and all bodily and spiritual good things, and wilt thou not serve him?'

A brother asked brother Giles: 'How might I fly from temptations?' His answer was: 'The man who flies from temptations flies from eternal life, for "None shall be crowned unless he have striven lawfully."'—*An. Fr.* iii. 87.

S. FRANCIS DESCRIBES THE STATE OF THE WICKED

* ALL those who are not in a state of repentance, 'and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, but are workers of vices and sins, and walk after their lust and evil desires, and observe not the things they have promised, and serve with their body the world, and the carnal desires, the cares, and anxieties of this life, and with their mind serve the Devil, by whom they have been deceived, and whose works they do—all these are blind, because they see not the true Light, our Lord Jesus Christ. They have not the wisdom of the Spirit, for they have not the Son of God within them, who is the true Wisdom of the Father. Of such it is said: 'Their wisdom hath been swallowed up.' They see, they recognise, they know what is evil, and they do it, and knowingly destroy their own souls. Give heed, ye blind, deceived by your enemies—namely, the flesh, the world, and the Devil—for to the body to sin is sweet and to serve God bitter, because all evil things issue and proceed from the heart of man, as saith the Lord in the Gospel.—*Epist.* ii. (*Opusc.* 14).

S. FRANCIS DESCRIBES THE DEATH OF THE WICKED

"THE body is sick, death is drawing nigh, the neighbours and friends come and say, 'Set thy house in order.' And see, his wife and children, his neighbours and friends, are weeping feigned tears, and he looks round and sees them weeping, and is moved by a bad impulse, and, thinking within himself, says: 'See, I put my soul and body and all that is mine into your hands.' Truly that man is cursed who entrusts and exposes his soul and body and all that is his to such hands! Wherefore the Lord saith by the Prophet: 'Cursed is the man who putteth his trust in man.' And his friends send at once for the priest, who says to him: 'Wouldst thou receive absolution for all thy sins?' 'I would,' he answers. 'Wilt thou make satisfaction out of thy substance for what thou hast done, and for thy acts of fraud and deceit?' 'No.' 'Why not?' 'Because I have disposed of all into the hands of my neighbours.' And then he begins to lose his speech, and so he dies most wretched. . . . And all the talents, power, and learning which he thought to have are taken from him, and the neighbours and friends take his substance and divide it, and say afterwards: 'Cursed be his soul, for he might have gained more than he did, and given us more.' Worms will devour his body, devils will gnaw his soul, and so he loses body and soul for the sake of this fleeting world.—*Epist.* ii. (*Opusc.* 16).

AN EXHORTATION TO THE LOVE OF GOD

*LET us all love the Lord God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and strength, with all our intellect and all our energies, with all our efforts, with all our inmost being, with all our desires and will, for that He gave and gives to us all His whole body, His whole soul, and His whole life, and He has created and redeemed us, and saved us by His mercy alone, and has bestowed, and still bestows all good things on us miserable and wretched beings —rotten, stinking, ungrateful, ignorant, and evil. Therefore let us desire nothing else, let us wish for nothing else, let nothing else give us pleasure and delight but our Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour, the true and only God.—*Regula* i., c. 23 (*Opusc.* 162).

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